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FUTURE
ISSUE 099

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Above: How much of the mythology surrounding WWI hero T.E. Lawrence is grounded in reality?

Welcome

Immortalised by the somewhat inaccurate (albeit brilliant) 1962 film, T.E.Lawrence is one of the First World War's most iconic figures. Far removed from the static, mud-strewn Western Front, his story is told as an almost swashbuckling adventure, supposedly taking down an entire empire through brains and daring. This issue Features Editor Tom takes a closer look at some of the mythology surrounding Lawrence, uncovering some of the darker sides of his tactics in Arabia, as well as the toll the long conflict took on him personally.

Tim Williamson
Editor-in-Chief

CONTRIBUTORS

DR ROBERT LYMAN

Robert is a retired British Army officer, historian, best-selling author and fellow of the Royal Historical Society. Over on page 66 he discusses the critical role of the Indian Army in the victory over Japan – one of the topics in his upcoming book *A War of Empires*.

JAMES HOLLAND

James is an award-winning historian, writer, broadcaster, best-selling author and co-host of weekly podcast *We Have Ways of Making You Talk*. On page 52 he recounts how the Sherwood Rangers helped storm the Siegfried Line in 1944.

MARK SIMNER

Mark returns to the pages of *History of War*, taking a look at the Battle of Omdurman during the Anglo-Egyptian campaign in Sudan – believed to be the scene of the final battlefield charge by British cavalry (p36).

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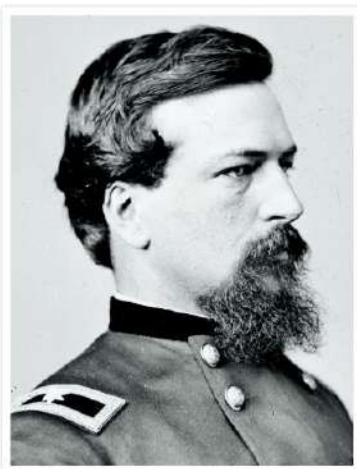

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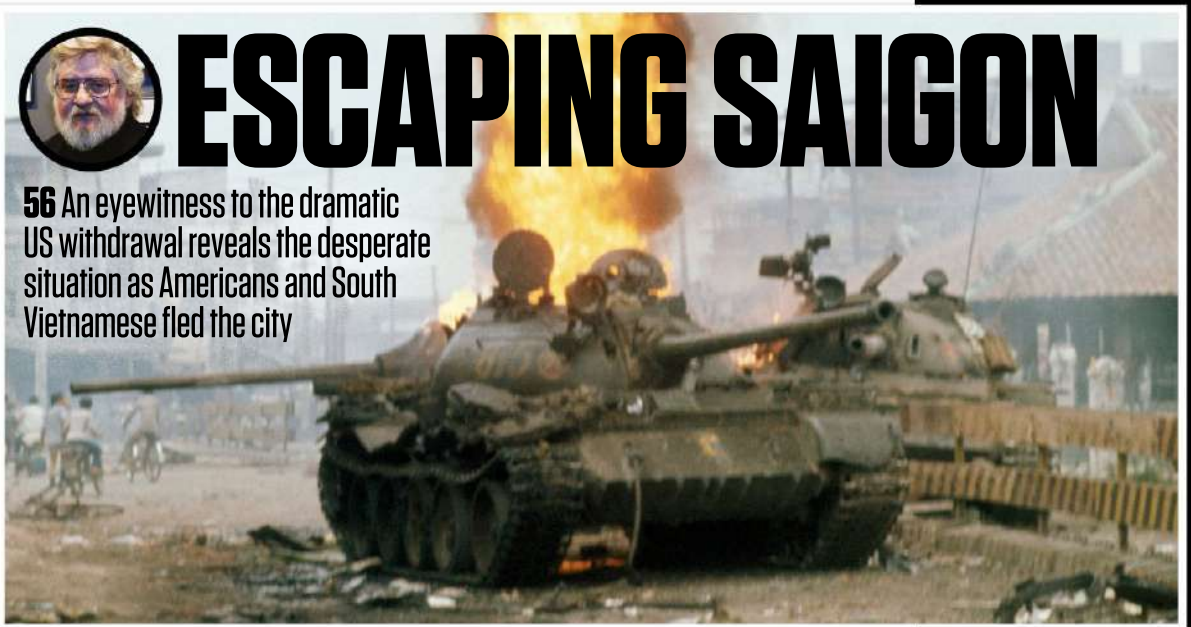


WAR in FOCUS

KEEP YOUR EARS PEELED

c.1943

A US Marine anti-aircraft unit demonstrates the operation of an acoustic location device. Also known as sound mirrors, war tubas or acoustic horns, these bizarre-looking machines were designed to identify enemy aircraft by honing in on the engine noise. Though rendered obsolete by the development of radar, there were many different designs of listening devices made around the world and some continued to be used throughout World War II, in conjunction with search lights and short-range radar.

© Alamy

WAR in FOCUS

SPLASHDOWN

5 May, 1961

A US Navy Marine HUS-1 helicopter recovers the Freedom 7 capsule from the Atlantic Ocean after its successful return from sub-orbital flight. Freedom 7 was piloted by the US Navy veteran Alan Shepard, who was the first American and second person ever to travel into space. The aircraft carrier USS Lake Champlain (CV-39) was responsible for the recovery of Shepard and the capsule. Shepard's mission came just weeks after Yuri Gagarin successfully became the first man to travel to space, on 12 April 1961.

© Getty

RINES
44

© Getty

WAR in FOCUS

BRIDGE TO FREEDOM

17 September, 1952

American troops in Korea celebrate the completion of the Freedom Gate Bridge, which they reconstructed across the Imjin River after the original was destroyed by bombing. The bridge was so named because it formed a vital crossing for POWs and wounded to travel back from the demilitarised zone into South Korea. Today the bridge lies within Imjingak Park, which commemorates those who fell during the Korean War.

TIMELINE OF...

THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR

The formidable Crusader Order vigorously defends the Holy Land against Muslim forces for almost two centuries, but its vast wealth eventually leads to a bloodthirsty downfall

Source: Wiki / PD / Art

1119

'POOR FELLOW-SOLDIERS'

A French knight called Hugues de Payens establishes a monastic order of the Poor Fellow-Soldiers of Christ in Jerusalem. Tasked with protecting Christian pilgrims on the routes to the Holy City, they are headquartered on the Temple Mount from 1128. This gives them their name Templars.

King Baldwin II of Jerusalem cedes the Temple Mount to Hugues de Payens

© Alamy

1139-45

OMNE DATUM OPTIMUM

In 1139 Pope Innocent II issues a papal bull called *Omne datum optimum* that officially endorses the Templars and exempts them from tithes and taxes. Two further bulls in 1144 and 1145 greatly increase Templar privileges, including the right to build their own churches.

Temple Church in London was consecrated in 1185 by Patriarch Heraclius of Jerusalem

© Getty

1139 – 1314

EUROPEAN POWER & WEALTH

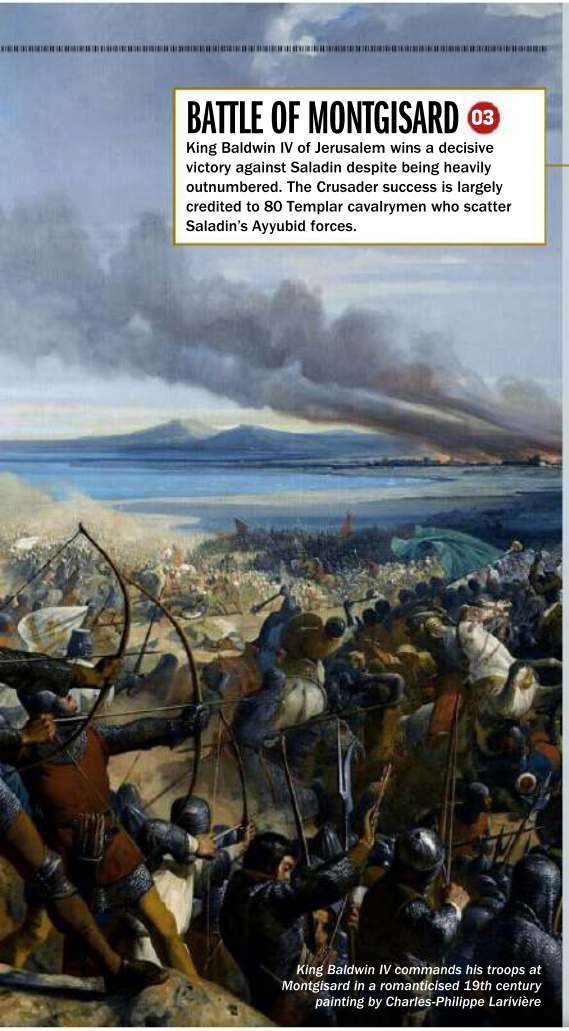
Although primarily concerned with Crusading activities, the Templars accumulate vast wealth and power across Europe by building a network of hundreds of churches, commanderies and fortifications. This is largely funded by an innocative banking system of credit arrangements for pilgrims.

Templar knights depicted playing chess

© Alamy

BATTLE OF MONTGISARD 03

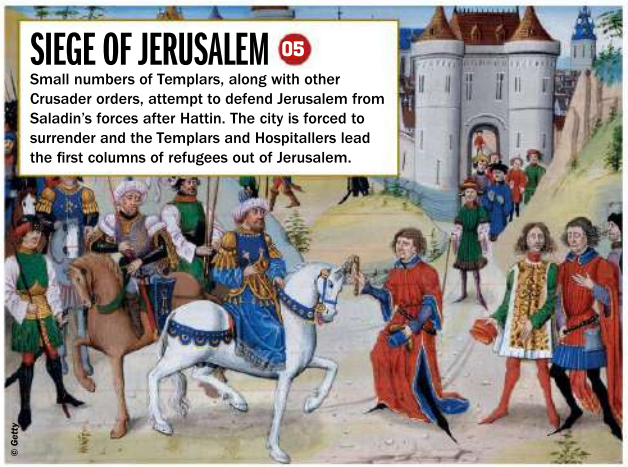
King Baldwin IV of Jerusalem wins a decisive victory against Saladin despite being heavily outnumbered. The Crusader success is largely credited to 80 Templar cavalrymen who scatter Saladin's Ayyubid forces.



King Baldwin IV commands his troops at Montgisard in a romanticised 19th century painting by Charles-Philippe Larivière

SIEGE OF JERUSALEM 05

Small numbers of Templars, along with other Crusader orders, attempt to defend Jerusalem from Saladin's forces after Hattin. The city is forced to surrender and the Templars and Hospitallers lead the first columns of refugees out of Jerusalem.



© Getty

***Above:** A 15th century French miniature depicts Balian of Ibelin surrendering Jerusalem to Saladin*

BATTLE OF HATTIN 04

The Kingdom of Jerusalem suffers its heaviest defeat, at Hattin, where the Crusader army is destroyed by Saladin. The Templar Grand Master, Gerard de Ridefort, survives his capture but hundreds of his fellow captured knights are executed.

Hattin results in the capture of King Guy I of Jerusalem and reasserts Muslim hegemony in the Holy Land until World War I

© Alamy

25 January – 22 August 1153 | 1163-69 | 25 November 1177 | 3-4 July 1187 | 20 September – 2 October 1187

SIEGE OF ASCALON 01

Templars and Hospitallers help capture the Fatimid fortress of Ascalon under the command of King Baldwin III of Jerusalem. Grand Master Bernard de Tremelay and 40 of his Templar knights are killed in the fighting.

A 15th century French portrayal of the Siege of Ascalon with an inaccurate depiction of the Crusaders using artillery

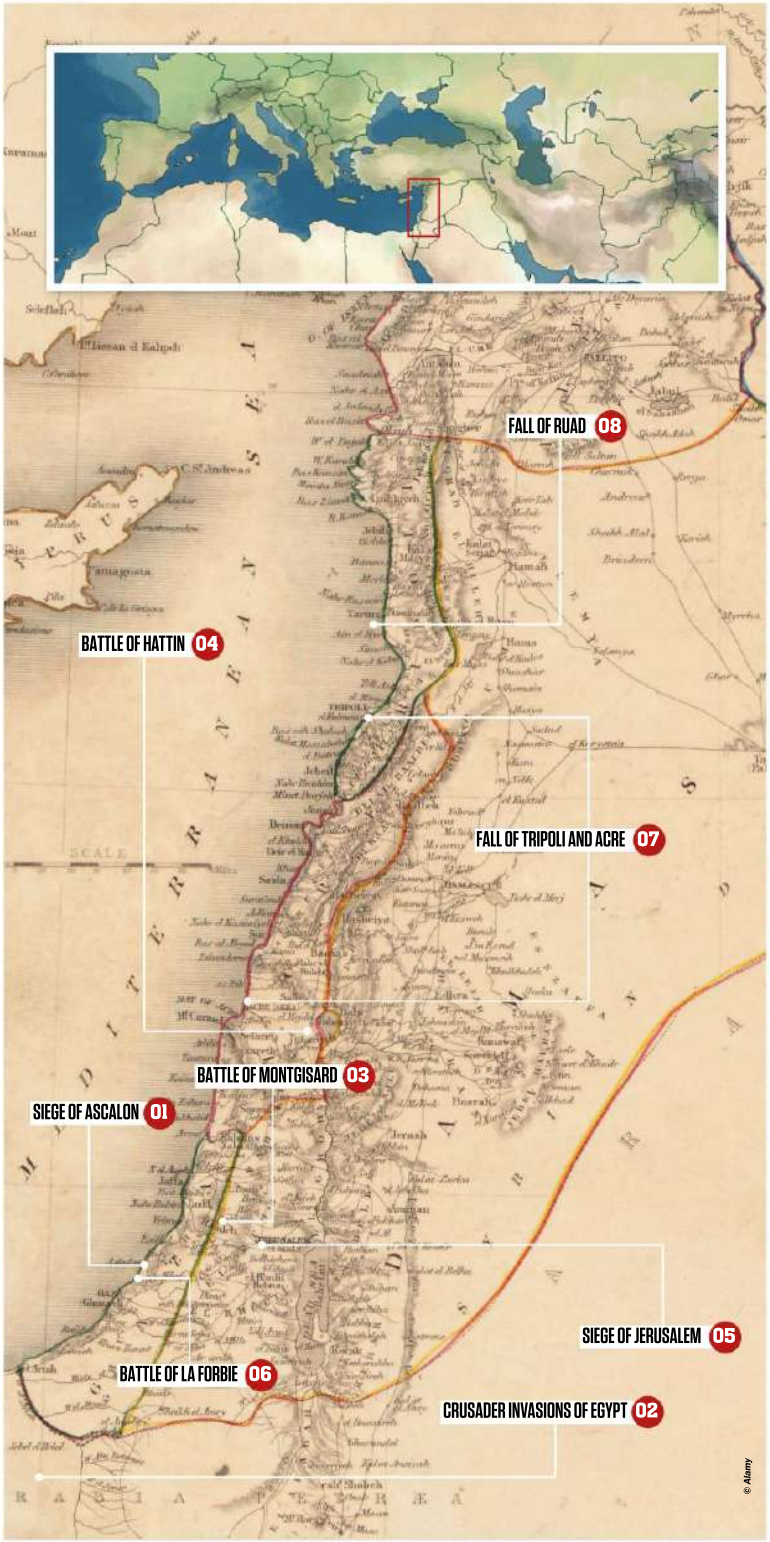
© Alamy

CRUSADER INVASIONS OF EGYPT 02

Templars participate in three Crusader invasions of Fatimid Egypt undertaken by the Kingdom of Jerusalem. The Crusaders, commanded by King Amalric I of Jerusalem, are ultimately forced to retreat.

A depiction of a Templar cavalry charge in battle

© Alamy


FALL OF RUAD 08
BATTLE OF HATTIN 04
FALL OF TRIPOLI AND ACRE 07
BATTLE OF MONTGISARD 03
SIEGE OF ASCALON 01
SIEGE OF JERUSALEM 05
BATTLE OF LA FORBIE 06
CRUSADER INVASIONS OF EGYPT 02
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At Las Navas de Tolosa, the Templars came under the loose command of King Alfonso VIII of Castile

BATTLE OF LAS NAVAS DE TOLOSA

Away from the Levant, the Templars participate in the Christian Reconquista of the Muslim states in southern Spain. This includes fighting in the decisive Christian victory at the Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa.

16 July 1212

11 May 1189 – 2 September 1192

THIRD CRUSADE

Despite their recent crushing defeats against Saladin, the Templars are revived by King Richard the Lionheart of England during the Third Crusade. They form the vanguard and rearguard of his army, and participate in major engagements such as Acre and Arsuf.

A late 13th century depiction of the Siege of Acre

A contemporary depiction of La Forbie in Chronica Majora, a chronicle written by an English Benedictine monk called Matthew Paris

BATTLE OF LA FORBIE 06

Approximately 300 Templars are killed along with thousands of other Crusaders in a heavy defeat against Ayyubid soldiers and Khwarezmian mercenaries near Gaza. The Muslim victory leads to the Seventh Crusade.

FALL OF RUAD 08

The Templars occupy a small island off the Syrian coast in 1300 but the Mamluks besiege the garrison in 1302. The Templars are starved into surrendering, which marks the loss of the last Crusader outpost in the Levant.

"THE TEMPLARS ARE STARVED INTO SURRENDERING"

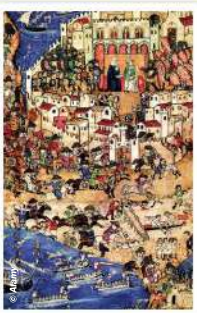
The remains of the medieval fort on Ruad (now Arwad)

17-18 October 1244

March 1289 – May 1291

1302

1307-12



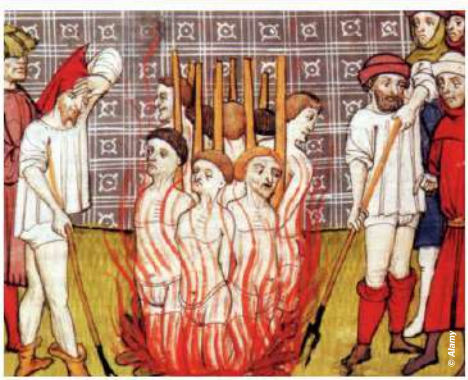
The capture of Tripoli in 1289 destroys the last Crusader state in the Holy Land

FALL OF TRIPOLI & ACRE 07

The Templars attempt to save the last remaining Crusader possessions in the Holy Land by sending reinforcements to Tripoli and defending Acre. Both cities fall to Muslim Mamluks and many surrendering Templars are killed at Acre.

DESTRUCTION

King Philip IV of France persecutes the Templars by pressing false criminal charges against them. Many, including the last Grand Master, are executed, with Philip pressuring Pope Clement V to disband the order in 1312.



Knights Templar depicted being burned at the stake following their torture into signing false confessions

GRAND MASTERS, KINGS & KNIGHTS

The Templars consisted of warriors from across Europe who accumulated great power – but often suffered violent deaths

JACQUES DE MOLAY

THE INFAMOUS LAST GRAND MASTER OF THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR COULDN'T PROTECT THE ORDER FROM ITS POWERFUL ENEMIES C.1245 – 1314 FRANCE

Jacques de Molay was probably born in eastern France to a family of minor nobility and joined the Templars in 1265. He was appointed Grand Master in 1292, but this was a bad time to begin leading the Templars. The last Crusader fortresses in the Holy Land had fallen to the Mamluks in 1291, with the Templars retreating and moving their headquarters to Cyprus.

The final loss of the Holy Land to Muslim forces seriously undermined the purpose of the Templars. De Molay toured Western Europe to try to gain support for a new Crusade but received a lukewarm reception. Despite these setbacks, de Molay's Templars launched naval raids from Cyprus on the Syrian and Egyptian coasts, and garrisoned the Syrian island of Ruad during 1300-02.

Although the Templars no longer had territory in the Holy Land, they were still vastly wealthy. King Philip IV of France was deeply in debt to them and used papal accusations against the Templars to destroy them. De Molay had returned to France during 1306-07 on the orders of the Pope Clement V to discuss a new Crusade but he also asked the pontiff to investigate spurious accusations of blasphemy and sodomy that had been made against the Templars.

Philip used these accusations to arrest de Molay and the Templars in 1307. Under torture, he confessed to some of the charges but not the charge of sodomy. He told his fellow Templars to also confess but during a subsequent papal investigation de Molay and many of his followers retracted their statements. The Grand Master claimed the confessions were extracted under torture and appealed to Clement for judgement. Under pressure from Philip, de Molay returned to his original confession but again recanted during the papal hearings.

The ordeal of de Molay and the Templars lasted for years, with Clement finally abolishing the Order in 1312. De Molay was sentenced to death and burned at the stake in Paris in March 1314. Protesting his innocence to the end, he reputedly cursed both Philip and Clement for the injustice inflicted on him. He shouted that neither man would live one year after his death. By the end of 1314 both Philip and Clement were dead.

Before he became king, Fulk often opposed King Henry I of England over French territory, but Henry ultimately arranged for his daughter Matilda to marry Fulk's son Geoffrey V of Anjou

FULK, KING OF JERUSALEM

THE TEMPLAR WHO BECAME A CRUSADER KING C.1090 – 1143 JERUSALEM

The paternal grandfather of King Henry II of England, Fulk was a French nobleman who became count of Anjou in 1109. Highly ambitious, Fulk initially laid the foundations of the Angevin Empire by expanding his French territories. However, after making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in about 1119-20 he became attached to the Templars and began subsidising them in the Holy Land.

Fulk married Melisende, the daughter and heir of King Baldwin II of Jerusalem, in 1129. His military experience allowed him to acquire considerable power and when Baldwin died in 1131, Fulk became co-monarch of Jerusalem with Melisende. In practice, he controlled the government and quickly sidelined his wife. During his 12-year reign, Fulk expanded the kingdom to its greatest territorial extent, including new access to the Red Sea. He was killed in a hunting accident at Acre when his horse stumbled and inflicted a mortal brain injury on the king.

***Above:** Many legends later circulated about Molay, including a false story that he captured Jerusalem in 1300*

Hugues was well-travelled and visited England and Scotland in 1128, where he founded the first Templar establishments in London and what is now the village of Temple in Midlothian

HUGUES DE PAYENS

THE FRENCH FOUNDER OF THE TEMPLARS

C.1070 – 1136 **JERUSALEM**

The early life of Hugues de Payens is shrouded in uncertainty, although it is known that he was a French knight and that he probably first visited Jerusalem in c.1114-16 with Hugh, Count of Champagne. De Payens remained in Palestine after the count returned to France and in 1119 established a monastic military order called the Poor Fellow Soldiers of Christ and of the Temple of Solomon. This was the origin of the Templars and it was later written that de Payens approached King Baldwin II of Jerusalem with eight knights (including two of his brothers) to found the Order. De Payens became the Templars' first Grand Master and commanded them for many years. These original Templars provided armed protection for pilgrims travelling to Jerusalem. De Payens travelled extensively across Europe to raise money and recruit soldiers for the Templars. He also formulated the Latin Code of Templar behaviours with Saint Bernard of Clairvaux.

GÉRARD DE RIDEFORT

THE GRAND MASTER WHO LED THE TEMPLARS TO TERRIBLE DEFEATS AT CRESSON AND HATTIN

C.1141-89 **JERUSALEM**

An adventurer of uncertain Flemish or Anglo-Norman origin, Gérard de Ridefort travelled to the Holy Land and became a close ally of the future king of Jerusalem, Guy de Lusignan. He joined the Templars in 1183 and was appointed Grand Master the following year. De Ridefort's influence enabled Guy to become king in 1186, but in May 1187 he commanded a small force of Templars and Hospitallers that was defeated by the Ayyubids at the Battle of Cresson. This engagement was a prelude to the huge Crusader defeat at the Battle of Hattin in July 1187, which effectively destroyed the Kingdom of Jerusalem. De Ridefort commanded the Templars at Hattin but he was captured along with King Guy. Saladin released de Ridefort, with the Grand Master proceeding to successfully defend the Syrian castle of Tartus. De Ridefort went on to lead the Templars at the Siege of Acre in 1189 during the Third Crusade, but his luck finally ran out when he was captured and executed by Saladin at Acre.

This depiction of Gérard de Ridefort from 1337 shows him in the act of recruiting new Templars

William Marshal was buried in Temple Church, London, which was the English headquarters of the Templars

WILLIAM MARSHAL, 1ST EARL OF PEMBROKE

THE 'BEST KNIGHT' OF ENGLISH KINGS WHO DIED AS A TEMPLAR C.1146 – 1219 **ENGLAND**

An Anglo-Norman nobleman, William Marshal was one of the most famous soldiers of his age and was described by his contemporary Cardinal Stephen Langton as the "best knight who ever lived". Although he was a prisoner of King Stephen of England as a boy, Marshal went on to become a knight and a successful tournament competitor. He ultimately served five English kings (Henry II, Henry the Young King, Richard the Lionheart, John I and Henry III) as a loyal captain. During 1183-85, he went on Crusade to Palestine to fulfil the dying wish of Henry the Young King and became associated with the Templars. Years later, Marshal was appointed as protector of the boy-king Henry III in 1216. He served as regent of England and was largely responsible for ensuring that the kingdom was not conquered by Prince Louis of France. When he died he fulfilled a vow made years earlier on Crusade when he was received into the Knights Templar on his deathbed.

GUALDIM PAIS

THE PORTUGUESE GRAND MASTER WHO FOUGHT IN THE IBERIAN RECONQUISTA 1118-95 **PORTUGAL**

Although the Templars' crusading activities were most famously active in the Holy Land, they also extensively crusaded in Iberia against the Moors. One of these Iberian Templars was Gualdim Pais, a Portuguese knight who served Afonso I, the first Christian king of a united Portugal.

Pais fought alongside Afonso at the Battle of Ourique in 1139 and was knighted for his bravery. He then became a Templar and crusaded in Palestine for five years. During this time, Pais participated in several sieges and battles before he returned home, and was appointed as the Templar Grand Master of Portugal in 1157.

As Grand Master, Pais founded several castles but his most significant achievement was establishing the city of Tomar in central Portugal. He built a formidable Templar stronghold within Tomar, called the Convent of Christ, which Pais successfully defended in 1190. The Templars were vastly outnumbered by Almohad forces commanded by Caliph Yaqub Al-Mansur but Pais' victory strengthened the kingdom of Portugal.

Pais is buried in the Church of Santa Maria do Olival in Tomar, which has been a designated as a Portuguese National Monument since 1910

All Images © Alamy

TEMPLAR MYTHS

In his book *The Templars*, historian Dan Jones addresses some of the biggest legends and mysteries surrounding the famous military order

For an organisation that shrouded itself in mystery, the Knights Templar is surprisingly well known. Perhaps the reason we still remember this order of medieval warrior monks – fixate on them, even – is because they wanted to keep their initiation rites and other practices top secret. In turn, the Templars have made a convenient plot device to carry countless books, TV shows and video games. Historian Dan Jones' book *The Templars: The Rise and Spectacular Fall of God's Holy Warriors* demystifies the monks and their elusive practices – here he shares what got him interested in the order, and some of the discoveries from his research.

A warrior from the Knights Templar on a white horse, while to the right are men from the Orders of Alcantara, Santiago and Calatrava respectively

What was it about the Knights Templar and its mysterious practices that drew you in as a historian?

For me, it's one of those few subjects that has instant name recognition. If you ask anyone to name something from the Middle Ages there's a good chance it's going to be the Templars. You can't say that for many subjects, and certainly not for many monarchs, except perhaps Richard the Lionheart or Richard III. It also has pop culture resonance through *The Da Vinci Code*, the *Assassin's Creed* video games, *Ivanhoe*, Indiana Jones and a TV show called *Knightfall*.

There's also all this mystery connecting them to the Holy Grail, so there's a rich grounding for a historian to peel away the myths and uncover the real story that lies beneath. Of course, we know that the Holy Grail didn't exist – it's an absurd idea – so there are these mysteries and legends waiting to be siphoned away to reveal the truth about the Knights Templar.

How did the Templars make the jump from oaths of poverty to becoming one of the richest military orders?

Interestingly, the very first Templars were actually very wealthy, well-connected people. Yes, the first Templars swore oaths of chastity and poverty, but the only people that need to swear an oath of poverty are those who aren't poor to begin with.

So in the very first years of the Templars, this idea came about of forming a pilgrim bodyguard, between 1119 and 1120. They take this concept with apparent ease to the king of Jerusalem, who immediately agrees to help fund it. So that's your first sign that these people are immensely well connected.

Then, in about 1126, the first Grand Master, Hugues de Payens, heads up a recruitment and fundraising tour across Europe. He crops up in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* asking Henry I if he can pop over to England and do some fundraising there. He's receiving donations from Queen Matilda. In fact, their first great sponsor was Bernard of Clairvaux, the great reforming abbot of his day.

The Templars coupled the taste for reforming monasticism and the trend for new orders with the fact that the Crusades were still popular at the time. It created a golden combination of powerful patronage from on high and strong support from below with the general public.

The last Grand Master, Jacques de Molay, is tortured and interrogated on the orders of Philip IV

A tomb effigy of a knight in Temple Church, London

Images © Getty

"THE FIRST TEMPLARS SWORE OATHS OF CHASTITY AND POVERTY, BUT THE ONLY PEOPLE THAT NEED TO SWEAR AN OATH OF POVERTY ARE THOSE WHO AREN'T POOR TO BEGIN WITH"

Did these monastic warriors really pioneer financial principles that we still use today?

This is one of the slight myths surrounding the Templars – that they were the world's first bankers and that no one before them had even thought about wealth transfer and other financial concepts, which isn't quite the case.

A better way to describe the Templars' sphere of business in modern terms would be as a financial service. Because they had such a vast and wide network of property, which was sanctified and well defended in many cases, they had access to a large repository. One could place their valuables with the Templar while they went off to the Crusades and protect their wealth in the meantime.

In 1215, even King John was using New Temple in London to hold his wealth and keep his royal coffers safe in the event of crisis, so we get the impression that the Templars were considered a very safe choice for people of the day. The Templars were, much like many financial institutions of today, offering lots of different services. For instance, they were running the accountancy and auditing processes of the French government of the early 1100s and beyond.

It certainly doesn't sound very sexy, but in Paris they were effectively the Royal Treasury of France. The Templars were even collecting crusading taxes for Pope Innocent III during the Fifth Crusade, mainly because he didn't want such large amounts of money passing through the Vatican.

How did the myths surrounding the Templar's initiation ceremonies contribute to its eventual demise?

Well, we know a lot about these practices because we have copies of the French and Catalan Rules of the Templars, which describe the long and elaborate initiation processes that they used. These practices required the prospective member to present himself before his fellow Templars and be inducted into the order with the 'Kiss of Peace'. There was nothing untoward about this element of the ceremony until you get to around 1306 and King Philip IV of France's campaign to disassemble the Knights Templar.

At this point, an evidence-gathering process begins, which in modern politics would be known as 'opposition research'. These people were looking for anything that could be used against the Templars, but the researchers found very little – we can see this from the records of the Templars' trials that took place in 1307.

Even with all the forced admissions extracted by torture, you get this overwhelming sense of 'Is that all you've got?' Philip's case against the Templars had three main points: worshipping idols, spitting on the Cross and that the Templars had been kissing one another in their induction ceremonies. It's clear this is an attempt to sex-up the vernacular of the Templar induction process.

What's absurd is that this accusation is being levelled by the king of France, a man who would have taken feudal homage from hundreds of people over his reign, all of whom would have been granted the Kiss of Peace. It's very cynical. It's basically the 'fake news' of its era.

Of all the monastic orders in the Middle Ages, why were the Knights Templar singled out for persecution?

Around the time of the final Crusade, calls had begun for the reform of the military orders including the Hospitallers, the Teutonic Knights and the Templars. By around 1290, these orders were essentially holding the fort for the European powers in the region.

It was a valiant effort, but it also meant they copped a lot of the blame when the last bastion of Acre fell in 1291. From this point on, we start to hear a call for the Templars and all the other smaller orders to be combined into one 'super order', which would then, presumably, be used to retake the Holy Land.

Then you come to a matter of personality. The last Grand Master, Jacques de Molay, was incapable of coping with his position. He was the wrong person and was in the wrong place at the wrong time. Molay, between 1306, prior to the mass arrests of the Templars, and 1314, when he was burned at the stake along with his fellow knights, made a constant stream of mistakes that left the order open to political assault from Philip IV.

There was also a closeness between the kingdom of France and the Templars stretching back generations, which effectively made the order an easy target for the French king. Add to that his desire to potentially roll the orders together and lead it into a new Crusade, and his ongoing rivalry with the pope, and you have an ideal way for Philip IV to weaken the papacy by proxy.

The Templars: The Rise and Spectacular Fall of God's Holy Warriors by Dan Jones is available to buy in all good stores

BATTLE OF CRESSON

In May 1187 the Knights Templar followed their master in a charge against superior odds at Cresson near Nazareth

The death of Jacques de Mailly at the Battle of Cressin, 1187

When young Baldwin V, King of Jerusalem, died in 1186, his mother Sibylla became queen and crowned her husband, Guy of Lusignan. They were backed, among others, by the Master of the Temple Gerard of Ridefort, but Baldwin's regent, the powerful Raymond of Tripoli, refused to recognise Guy and withdrew to his lands around Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee. These baronial struggles contrast to the unity achieved by Saladin, who had gradually encircled the Crusader states.

A fine line

Saladin's capture of the castle at Jacob's Ford in 1179 had meant truces were useful for Raymond, since Tiberias was on the trade route from Damascus to the north; some thought he was allying with Saladin to protect himself from Guy's ambitions or perhaps to take the throne, and he was even suspected of becoming a Muslim. When Reginald of Karak attacked a Muslim caravan between Cairo and Damascus in early 1187, Saladin swore to lead a jihad against the Kingdom of Jerusalem and kill Reginald personally.

As tensions grew, Balian of Ibelin persuaded Guy that Raymond's strength was needed and led an embassy north, including ten Hospitaller knights escorting Roger of Moulins, their Grand Master, and also Gerard de Ridefort. Since Gerard and Raymond cordially detested one another the reason he was included is questionable. The party stopped at Balian's castle at Nablus, Balian delaying here while the others rode on to the Templar stronghold of La Fève (al-Fulah).

Enter Gökböri

Meanwhile, to avenge the attack on the caravan, Saladin told his son al-Afdal to send a reconnaissance into Palestine. Al-Afdal came to Raymond and asked permission to cross his territory the next day, as had been agreed between the count and Saladin. Raymond agreed provided they returned by evening and did not interfere with his subjects. Raymond then sent messengers to towns along their route to stay inside; hearing that evening of the delegation, he sent word to La Fève. Next morning, 1 May 1187, the Emir Muzaffar ad-Din Gökböri and a large force (contemporaries say 7,000 men but more likely 700) entered Raymond's lands.

Unfortunately, Gerard de Ridefort had ignored Raymond's messenger and immediately ordered 90 Templar knights at their convent at Caco (Al Qaqun) a few miles away under the Marshal, James of Mailly, to join him, setting up their tents outside the castle. Next morning they arrived at Nazareth and were joined by 40 royal knights. Gerard encouraged those fit to bear arms to follow after them for booty.

A few miles beyond, they spotted the Muslims in a valley, returning and watering their horses at the Springs of Cresson (Ayn Juzah). It was a much larger force than that of the Christians, which consisted of about 140 knights, some turcopoles (native mounted archers) and perhaps 300 infantry. Both James and Roger tried to talk Gerard out of any attack but he was having none of it. He accused James of cowardice, saying he was too fond of his own blonde head, and had the taunt thrown back at him. Stung by this insult and without waiting for their infantry for protection against archers, he ordered a mounted charge downhill.

Ride to ruin

Muslim sources say the fighting took place in a forest and at first the Crusaders caught their enemy off-guard, but Dildirim al Yaruqi's men from Aleppo drew praise for holding firm. The impact of the charge was soon spent and lost cohesion. Gerard later said the Christians were ambushed but the horse archers may have drawn them in, before Gökböri together with Qaymaz al Najmi and his Damascus continent led a counterattack and the superior numbers closed round them with lances, swords and maces.

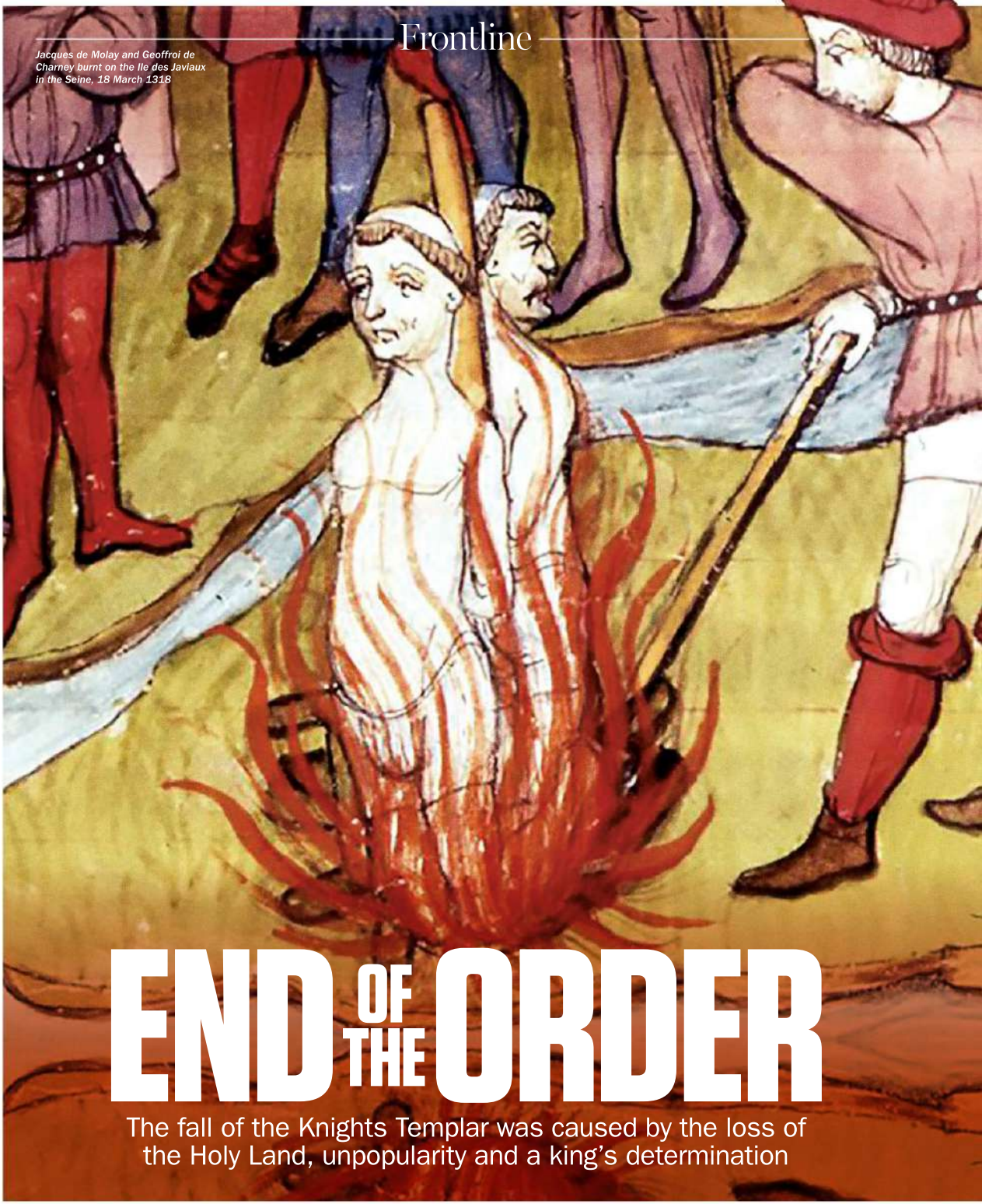
The Templar and Hospitaller squires fled with the baggage. The royal knights were captured but all except about three of the military orders were killed. James was beheaded and Roger perished. Gerard survived, retreating badly wounded into Nazareth. Those who had followed from Nazareth were killed or captured. Balian arrived with his men that morning at La Fève to find it almost empty; puzzled, he eventually rode on to be met by a wounded Templar who had survived the battle. In Tiberias, Raymond watched the Muslims ride by, having touched no property but with Templar heads fixed to their lances.

This incident only served to exacerbate the discord between Gerard and Raymond. King Guy managed to patch up his differences with Raymond but the price was high. The loss of so many knights of the Kingdom of Jerusalem was a disaster, as was that of the Marshal of the Temple and the death of Roger of Moulins, a courageous warrior and a loss to the Hospitallers. A few weeks later when Gerard advised Guy to give battle to Saladin and the royal army was soundly beaten at Hattin, those warrior monks were sorely missed. After this, Saladin captured Jerusalem.

"RAYMOND WATCHED THE MUSLIMS RIDE BY, HAVING TOUCHED NO PROPERTY BUT WITH TEMPLAR HEADS FIXED TO THEIR LANCES"

A 15th century depiction of the battle

Images © Alamy



Jacques de Molay and Geoffroi de Charney burnt on the Ile des Javiaux in the Seine, 18 March 1318

END OF THE ORDER

The fall of the Knights Templar was caused by the loss of the Holy Land, unpopularity and a king's determination

When the Kingdom of Jerusalem fell in 1291, the Templars lost their main reason for existence, but prior to this there were already accusations of pride, greed, treachery and sedition. The Order held large estates throughout Europe, some of which were gifts that could become bribes for political help. The Order also used its wealth for its banking operations, so less money went East, a reluctance compounded by the worsening situation there. Military failures in the East were sometimes interpreted as treachery. The Templars attracted criticism from several popes, notably Innocent III in 1207 for burying excommunicates in their cemeteries. In addition, frequently rotating commanders in local houses had led to lack of efficient administration.

A united Crusade

Raymon Lull's obsession for a united crusading order to recover Jerusalem, with a leader of royal blood, may well have appealed to Philip IV of France but finances would be needed. Lawyer and propagandist Pierre Dubois' united crusading pamphlet additionally advocated abolishing the Templars. In June 1306 Pope Clement V summoned the Grand Masters of Temple and Hospital to Poitiers in part to discuss one united Order but, because of rivalry between the two leaders, Templar Master Jacques de Molay blocked most proposals, perhaps unwisely since the Pope was French and influenced by Philip.

Esquin de Floyran, who had already attempted unsuccessfully to condemn the Templars to James II of Aragon, probably persuaded the royal French judge, Guillaume de Nogaret, a violent cleric hater adept at using accusations of heresy and magical practices. Jacques de Molay tried to obtain a papal inquiry but Philip acted quickly.

Philip strikes

On 14 September 1307 sealed arrest orders were sent throughout France, to be carried out on 13 October. Philip acted without papal authority, or that of the Inquisition, using his private confessor Guillaume de Paris as Inquisitor. For legality he needed Pope Clement, the latter taking control of the trial to have some say in the matter.

Charges were levelled of devious practices, principally: denying Christ, God, the virgin or saints in a secret ceremony; sacrilegious acts on the cross or image of Christ; obscene kissing; homosexuality; priests not consecrating the Host; not believing the sacraments; worshipping idols; and the Grand Master or other dignitaries absolving brethren from their sins. Some of these may have begun as tests of full obedience, and while it is possible the pious Philip believed some charges, it is also likely he felt that the Templars posed a threat to the state, or that he simply coveted their wealth.

Confession and torture

The tortures of the Inquisition – arms suspended behind the back from a pulley, pouring water down the throat, the rack and fire – were employed to extract confessions, often from brothers who were not knights but sergeants or lower and willing to confess, as were knights who had joined for the privileges offered. Many were illiterate and ill-equipped to deflect criticism.

On 22 November 1307 Clement issued a bull requiring Christian rulers to arrest the Templars and seize their lands for the papacy. Few countries used the methods seen in France: Aragon and England prohibited torture and in the latter not one confession was obtained. As the papal commission agreed to hear cases, even in France retractions started appearing, so early in 1308 Clement halted proceedings.

"THE ROYALIST ARCHBISHOP OF SENS TOOK DRASTIC ACTION: ON 12 MAY 1310 HE BURNT 54 SUCH MEN IN A FIELD OUTSIDE PARIS AND THE RETRACTIONS FIZZLED OUT"

While Dubois produced pamphlets on de Molay's confession, it took Philip six months of wrangling and threats to get the Pope to recommence, with a commission investigating the Order and provincial councils dealing with individuals. Despite torture, hundreds wished to speak out, buoyed up by those in other counties. The royalist archbishop of Sens took drastic action: on 12 May 1310 he burnt 54 such men in a field outside Paris and the retractions fizzled out.

Suppression

In October 1311 the General Church Council finally opened at Vienne but confessional evidence came mainly from French influenced areas and many fathers were resistant to suppressing the Order. Nine Templars appeared in defence of their Order but Clement had them arrested.

On 20 March 1312, losing patience, Philip arrived with armed force and two days later a bull suppressed the Order. Clement granted most Templar property to the Hospitallers but some ended up in secular coffers. Some Templars faced imprisonment, innocent men sent to monasteries or other Orders, but eventually many ex-Templars were left to live quiet lives of work and prayer.

On 18 March 1314 four chief officers were brought before a special commission in Paris to impose life imprisonment for heresy but Jacques de Molay and Geoffroi de Charney suddenly retracted their confessions and pleaded their innocence; they were burnt on the Ile des Javiaux that evening. Both Clement and Philip died within months – God's judgement, people muttered, after being cursed by de Molay as he perished.

Philip IV the Fair, with his children, from a 14th-century manuscript

***Below:** A roll concerning the trial of the Templars in France, containing 231 depositions, from the Vatican Archives*

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Above: Lawrence photographed Arab forces entering Aqaba on 6 July 1917. This one image led to the widespread belief that Aqaba was captured with a mounted charge rather than by negotiation

Top: An Arab irregular patrol flies the flag of the revolt during WWI

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Above: Lawrence at Aqaba, 6 July 1917. He wrote of his role during the Arab Revolt: "I drew these tides of men into my hands and wrote my will across the sky in stars"

LAWRENCE
BATTLE FOR ARABIA

WORDS TOM GARNER

Dr Rob Johnson of Pembroke College, University of Oxford, discusses how an eccentric British archaeologist fought his way across the Middle East and became a military icon

Dr Rob Johnson is a Senior Research Fellow at Pembroke College, University of Oxford and the Director of the Oxford Changing Character of War Centre

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The story of Thomas Edward Lawrence has fascinated the world for over a century. An archaeologist, historian and expert on Arabian culture, Lawrence became an international celebrity for his role in assisting the Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire during WWI. He later detailed these experiences in his acclaimed book *Seven Pillars of Wisdom,* but he was traumatised by the war and the Allied political betrayal of the Arabs.

Lawrence's life was troubled yet he was also a skilled irregular soldier. An inspiration for many military theorists, he fought heroically and often successfully during 1916-18 despite having no formal training. However, his complexity means that his military achievements are difficult to assess. Dr Rob Johnson believes that much of the Arab Revolt's success should actually be credited to the Arabs themselves rather than Lawrence. In his research, Johnson has uncovered a complicated character who was brave,intelligent but also flawed – and perhaps even a criminal.

Bureaus and railways

Lawrence was commissioned as a British Army officer in October 1914 and joined the Arab Bureau in Cairo two months later. The Bureau collected propaganda and intelligence about Arabian matters in the Middle East, and Lawrence initially made maps but his real skill was his expertise on the Arabs. "His pre-war knowledge of Sinai, the Levant and Syria was valuable because there weren't many people who had surveyed that area," says Johnson. "Like his colleagues, Lawrence scoured Arabic newspapers and Ottoman statements to pick up information about their military movements and intentions. That's why he had an advantage when he went into Arabia to assist Arab forces. He had a basic knowledge of how the Ottoman Army worked and a sense of the big picture."

Key to Ottoman military power in the Middle East was the Hejaz Railway. "It was the lifeline to their southernmost provinces in Arabia, particularly Medina," says Johnson. "If they wanted to deploy troops as far as Aden they were logistically dependent on the railway. The Hejaz represented a lateral line of communications for Ottoman forces to protect Arabia. If the British tried to strike north through Palestine the Ottomans could deploy reinforcements if the railway remained strong."

This vital railway came under immediate threat when Sharif Ibn Hussein of Mecca declared the Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire on 5 June 1916. The revolt transformed Lawrence's role when he was dispatched to southern Arabia in October 1916 to act as a liaison officer. "He provided a link between the British military headquarters in Egypt and the Arab leaders," explains Johnson. "Lawrence quickly discovered the revolt was very divided but detected that the fighting was going to be conducted by the sons of Hussein. He famously met one of these sons, Emir Faisal, and the situation was transformed.

Above, left: *Before World War I, Lawrence (left) worked as an archaeologist in the ancient city of Carchemish in northern Syria*

Above: *Lawrence arrived in Damascus on 1 October 1918 in his personal Rolls-Royce, nicknamed Blue Mist*

Lawrence took this picture of Arab forces on the march in 1917

© Alamy

Ottoman soldiers during WWI

© Alamy

"Faisal had political acumen but also had (unlike the other sons) some military experience. Lawrence thought Faisal was unlikely to inherit his father's control of the Hejaz. He therefore might agree that Arab forces should go north into the Levant and Syria and conquer Arabia. Lawrence saw real potential in him."

Faisal was judged the most suitable candidate to lead a post-war Arabian state but at this stage Lawrence was merely a lieutenant in the British mission to assist the Arabs. "The real British leaders were Colonels Pierce Joyce and Stewart Newcombe. These officers were trusted and regarded as heroic by the Arabs because they were brave and knew how to handle explosives. Lawrence was just seen as a junior officer and interpreter," says Johnson.

Despite his lower rank, Lawrence made secret plans with Faisal and other Arab leaders to attempt to take the northern Red Sea port of Aqaba. Johnson explains how this was a crucial moment: "This is where Lawrence's transformation really occurs. He did a good job of encouraging Faisal and his acolytes to stay cohesive after a military debacle that ended with the Arabs being forced back to the coast under Royal Navy protection. Lawrence was able to build their trust because he was beginning to carry out audacious raids. He also spoke Arabic and was keen to culturally align with the Arabs, including wearing their clothes. Most British officers would not have done that."

Aqaba

The Battle of Aqaba, when Arab troops captured the port on 6 July 1917 by surprising Ottoman forces from inland, is arguably the most famous event of Lawrence's military career. It had taken months to plan but Johnson says that Lawrence's precise role is controversial: "There are at least three claimants for who suggested going to Aqaba. One was Colonel Édouard Brémond, a French commander who thought there was a possibility of taking Aqaba because the Allies had taken other ports. However, he was effectively talked out of it by Lawrence because Brémond wanted to make a large Allied landing. Lawrence responded by saying, 'If you do it, you'll be hemmed in like at Gallipoli.'

"The consensus among Lawrence specialists is that [Howeitat leader] Auda Abu Tayi probably came up with the final idea. Auda was to some extent driven by money, prestige and honour. He was also an opportunist and probably took the view that if you captured a port like Rabigh or Yanbu you could help yourself to whatever was in there. It was his audacity that gave the Arabs military success towards Aqaba."

This boldness required the Arab fighters and Lawrence to undertake a journey of hundreds of kilometres through inhospitable terrain from 9 May 1917. "It was appallingly difficult," says Johnson. "The first stage was crossing the 'al-Houl' ('The Terror'), which was a huge, waterless desert region. We sometimes underestimate how

Emir Faisal later became the first king of Iraq in 1921, although he never realised his dream of ruling a united Arab state

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An Ottoman train and railway station destroyed in a raid by Lawrence

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A rusting Ottoman locomotive on its side next to the Hejaz Railways many decades after it was destroyed during the Arab Revolt

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Lawrence (centre, on foot) with his personal bodyguard of Arab irregular fighters, c.1917

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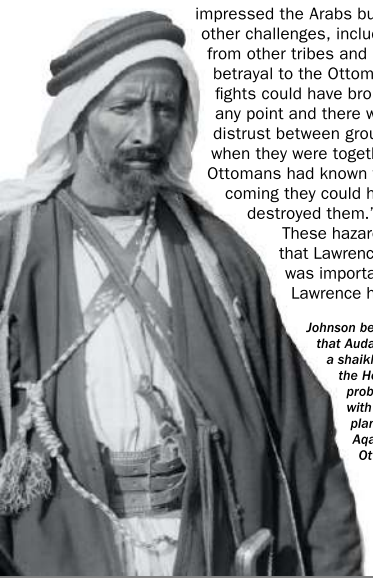
big the desert is, and if you go there at the height of summer (which Lawrence did) it is so hot that your lungs are emptied of air and you have to regulate your breathing.

"Dehydration was a real threat and Lawrence wrote that several men were killed on the journey by snake bites. One fell off his camel and was famously rescued by Lawrence, who went back for him. This quite impressed the Arabs but there were other challenges, including hostility from other tribes and potential betrayal to the Ottomans. Tribal fights could have broken out at any point and there was lots of distrust between groups even when they were together. If the Ottomans had known they were coming they could have easily destroyed them."

These hazards meant that Lawrence's survival was important: "If Lawrence had been killed that would have ended that operation because the other Arabs wanted to raid further up the Hejaz Railway. We know that's important because a British captain called Shakespear (who was attached to Ibn Saud, the future king of Saudi Arabia) was killed in 1915 on a very similar mission. That ended close liaison between the British and Ibn Saud for a year."


Johnson believes that Auda Abu Tayi, a shaikh (leader) of the Howeitat tribe probably came up with the successful plan to capture Aqaba from Ottoman forces

"HE WAS A COMPLICATED MAN WHO WAS BRAVE AND HIGHLY INTELLIGENT BUT ALSO FLAWED – AND PERHAPS EVEN A WAR CRIMINAL"

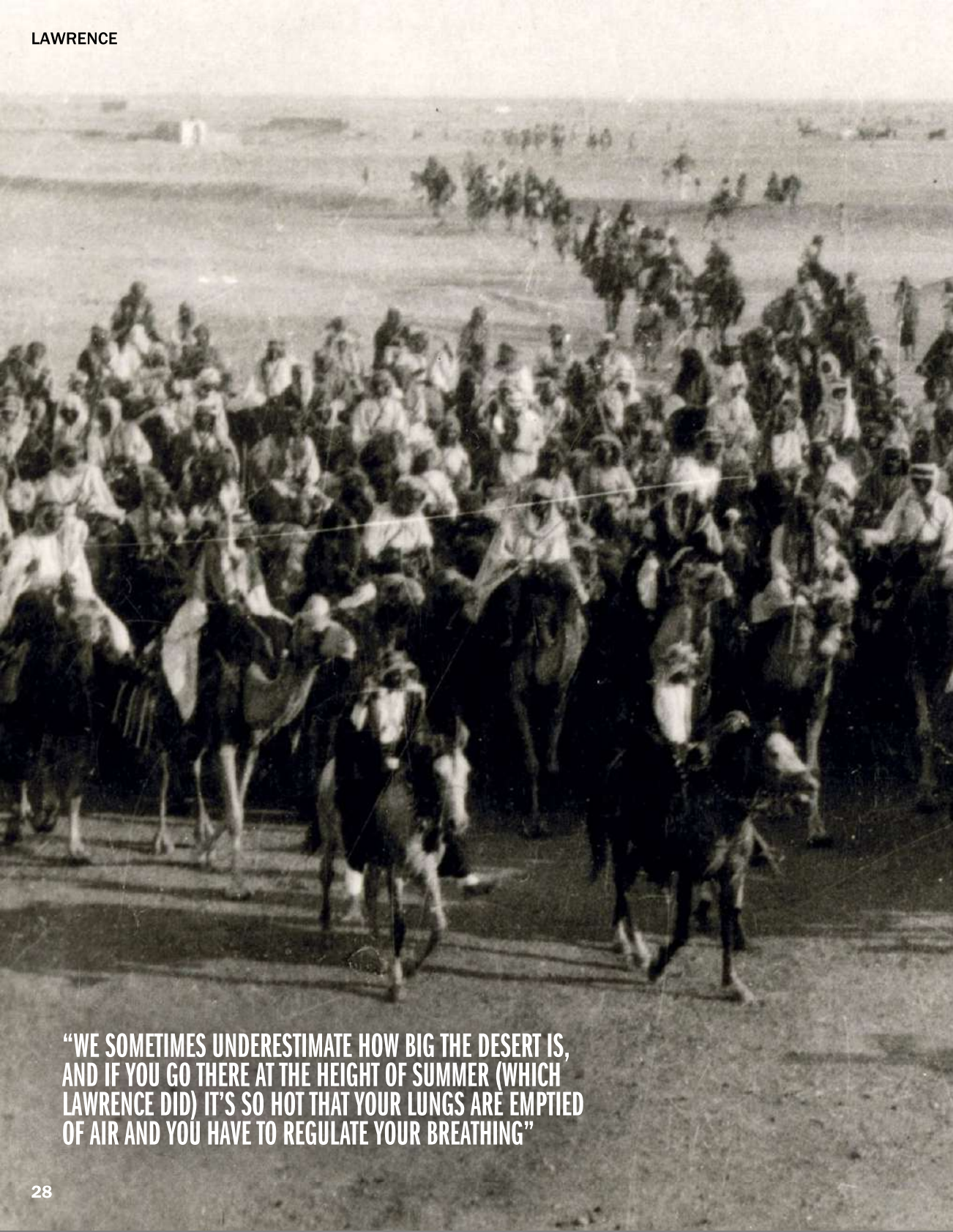
Once the Arabs finally reached Aqaba its fall was swift. "They actually took Aqaba by negotiation rather than fighting," says Johnson. "There were sensible Ottomans who realised they were completely cut off and couldn't be resupplied. Perhaps one-third of the Ottoman Army during WWI was probably Arabic rather than Turkish. An Arab conscript was more likely to survive if Aqaba was taken by negotiation. Also, the cavalry charge in David Lean's 1962 film [*Lawrence of Arabia*] was nothing like the reality. There was a sandstorm and the Arabs only rode quickly to get shelter. The dramatic legend of the Arabs entering Aqaba is based on one photograph taken by Lawrence of them riding at speed."

Johnson argues that Aqaba's strategic importance to the Allies has also been overplayed: "We're told that it was strategically significant because it provided a potential naval base for operations into the interior. The problem is the strategic reality. What difference did it make to the campaign when the Arabs took it in July 1917? It didn't. No large-scale Allied force was brought in at that point except Arab regulars who had been trained in Egypt. It wasn't a vital strategic hub for the first six months and was more important to the Arabs than the Allies.

"Edmund Allenby, the commander of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force (EEF), could see Aqaba's potential but realised it was too difficult to get a brigade or more located there. It was a waste of resources, which he needed for Palestine. Aqaba was an achievement but there were six months of stalemate afterwards where the Arabs made almost no progress."

Raids and leadership

Lawrence was promoted after Aqaba and given, in the words of Allenby, almost "free rein" to conduct irregular Arab raids against the Hejaz Railway. During July-September 1917, the railway was attacked once every three days in raids that destroyed locomotives,



"WE SOMETIMES UNDERESTIMATE HOW BIG THE DESERT IS, AND IF YOU GO THERE AT THE HEIGHT OF SUMMER (WHICH LAWRENCE DID) IT'S SO HOT THAT YOUR LUNGS ARE EMPTIED OF AIR AND YOU HAVE TO REGULATE YOUR BREATHING"

The Arab Northern Army advances against Ottoman forces. Lawrence can be seen as the robed figure in white towards the centre of the mounted group

© Alamy

wagons, bridges and tracks. Johnson explains the difficulties Lawrence faced: "During the hot summer months you had to move at night to avoid detection. There were navigation problems in an area without maps and you were dependent on compasses, the stars, local knowledge and guides.

"If Ottoman outposts were more strongly defended than you anticipated you could have problems laying charges. This happened to Lawrence on multiple occasions. It sometimes took hours to get explosives into railway ballasts with the potential of being detected. Even if you laid a charge you had to get out of the way and the Ottomans were very good at sweeping railway lines. If you think of the attacks like a special forces raid then you have a sense of how difficult this was."

The raids were frequently unsuccessful: "One at Yarmuk went so badly wrong that Lawrence tried to cobble together a few minor attacks on other parts of the railway. He didn't have enough explosives, detonating wire and all sorts of bombs. Sometimes the plunger box didn't function and it was extremely difficult."

Raiding became even more difficult during the winter of 1917-18: "People think deserts are extremely hot all the time but they're not. That winter was one of the coldest of the 20th century, including in the Middle East where it was unusually cold and wet. Lawrence was based at the medieval fortress of Qasr Azraq but was so appalled at the bad weather and low morale that he wasn't able to make any progress. Raiding became too hard and he withdrew to the General Headquarters in Palestine. He basically resigned from the operation."

Such was the strain of that winter that the Arab fighters began murdering each other. "That's how bleak it was and Lawrence gave a vivid description of a journey where he was almost killed by tribesmen," says Johnson. "It gives an idea of how awful conditions were. His personal bodyguard were extremely loyal to him but there was a killing of a bodyguard by one of the other members. This demonstrates that there must have been huge tensions, and when Lawrence conducted reconnaissance there was the risk of betrayal."

Because of the unique nature of his role, Lawrence's leadership of the Arabs was unconventional. "He created his own personal bodyguard, which varied in number from 20-60, although he sometimes appeared on his own," explains Johnson. "He personally commanded and directed them as both a protective force and a little reserve. But Lawrence had no direct command more generally in the Arab movement except for very small raiding parties. He would persuade others to come with him and if raids were successful they built prestige."

Johnson believes that Lawrence was a reluctant leader: "He felt deeply uncomfortable on a few occasions. There's an episode in 1918 where he found himself in command and made a joke of it to the Arabs. However, it must have been precarious because if he offended anyone he could have been instantly killed. During the final campaign, Arab fighters withdrew from a larger Ottoman force at Al-Shaykh Saad. Lawrence overruled them and was able to do that after months of campaigning and being sufficiently respected by the Arabs. This suggests that he knew how to lead others but I don't think he liked it because leadership places certain demands."

Tafila

In January 1918, Lawrence fought a pitched battle at Tafila as Arab irregular forces were pushing towards the Dead Sea. "Jerusalem was already in British hands but the mountains were almost purpose-built for defence," says Johnson. "They are rocky, exhausting to ascend and the Ottomans were being readily supplied by this route. Lawrence took a party forward to see how far they could get and when they got to the village of Tafila they found a very mixed community. Some were pro-Ottoman and others were eager to get rid of them.

"As the forward patrols fanned out north beyond Tafila they encountered an Ottoman brigade. There was some skirmishing and the Arabs fell back with the Ottomans pursuing them up to Tafila. Lawrence and his comrades should have pulled back but I think they felt that they couldn't entirely abandon the villagers."

The ensuing battle "should never have happened but once the Arabs were caught they had to fight. The Ottomans established a firebase on a ridge and fired down on the retreating Arab forces. There was then a lull because the Ottomans thought they had dispersed the Arabs and decided to stay in

***Below:** American journalist Lowell Thomas (right) met Lawrence in Arabia and turned the hitherto unknown officer into an international celebrity*

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***Right:** Lawrence was a medieval historian and once based himself at Qasr Azraq during the winter of 1917-18. This fortress was built by the Ayyubids during the 13th century*

LEADERS OF THE REVOLT

Dr Rob Johnson reveals the Arab military commanders who deserve more credit for the success of their rebellion

NURI AL-SAID

"Nuri commanded the Arab regular army. Many former Ottoman soldiers were captured and imprisoned in Egyptian POW camps but were offered to join the regular Arab army with khaki uniforms. They were trained as regular forces with Nuri as the field commander. He recaptured Abu el-Sam in January 1918 and secured the route to Aqaba. Nuri raided Maan and was prominent in quite large-scale operations to take Jurf al-Darawish. In that battle he tried to control irregular Arabs and orchestrated a very successful attack.

"Because he was a regular officer, Nuri is deserving of more recognition. He also defeated Abdul el Kader's putsch in Damascus because he anticipated where to put his forces. Without him in October 1918, Lawrence would not have held onto Damascus. He's a really important man and not given enough credit."

Nuri al-Said (second from left) pictured with Emir Faisal (centre) and Lawrence (third from right) at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919

Ja'far al-Askari served as the third prime minister of Iraq during 1923-24 and was later assassinated during a coup in 1936

JA'FAR AL-ASKARI

"Ja'far al-Askari was a former Ottoman officer who fought in Libya and was captured in Egypt. He went on to train Arab troops and was very effective. He can be compared to Friedrich von Steuben, who trained the Continental Army for George Washington during the American Revolutionary War. I think Ja'far al-Askari is that guy for the Arab army and he's effectively the founder of modern, regular Arab troops."

MALUD BEY

"Malud Bey held Petra against an Ottoman battalion sometime in autumn 1917. He did it by classic guerrilla warfare and was also the commander who held the mountains around Wadi Hesa in that dreadful winter of 1917-18. He was very stoic, inspirational and a good solid military leader. He was the sort of guy you needed for that kind of military endurance. If it hadn't been for him, the route to Aqaba would have been reopened for the Ottomans. The greatest travesty for his reputation was when the journalist Lowell Thomas replaced him for the defence of Petra with Lawrence himself."

Malud Bey defended Petra, the magnificent Ancient Nabataean city which is now located in southern Jordan

"NASIR WAS BOTH DEPENDABLE AND AN ADROIT LEADER WHO UNDERSTOOD POLITICAL CONTEXT"

SHERIF NASIR

"Nasir was from Medina and led irregulars. While Nuri was good at leading regulars, Nasir was good at leading irregulars. The two men together were quite effective. Nasir led the fighting at Tafila and independently led diversionary operations from the Wadi Hesa area, which also assisted Nuri, who held the line. Lawrence was a more constant companion to Nasir and in many ways he is the unsung hero of the story. Faisal gets the credit as a political leader but he wasn't making military decisions. Nasir was out fighting, taking risks and leading large columns of irregular forces. He and Lawrence were in constant dialogue in a way that Auda Abu Tayi wasn't. Auda was brilliant in battle but wasn't dependable. Nasir was both dependable and an adroit leader who understood political context. He should be accorded much more credit in this revolt."

Source: PD / Library of Congress

Bedouin fighters on horseback pictured bearing rifles, c.1918. They were possibly part of the forces that fought with Lawrence

what they thought was a strong location. At this stage the Arabs decided to counterattack. It's not clear whose idea this was but it was probably Sherif Nasir. The attack was broadly successful because the Arabs made a classic pincer movement on this Ottoman force. The Ottomans were so surprised that they tried to escape and it turned into a disaster. They were cut down in large numbers and the Arabs captured machine guns."

With reputed casualties of 600 Ottomans compared to 100 Arabs, Tafila was a notable success – but Johnson disputes the figures: "If you look at Ottoman records they say, 'Yes, there was a battle' but the losses were far fewer than Lawrence claims. We know the Ottoman force must have stayed reasonably intact because without reinforcements it came back and defeated Emir Zeid (Faisal's younger brother) a few weeks later when Lawrence had left that group."

Whatever the truth of the battle, Lawrence was promoted again after Tafila, this time to lieutenant colonel. The pitched nature of the engagement (which included a mounted charge) has often been portrayed as appealing to Lawrence's medievalism. However, Johnson

"LAWRENCE KNEW THAT THE ARABS WERE NOT GOING TO TAKE PRISONERS, PARTICULARLY WITH AN OTTOMAN BACK RECORD OF ATROCITIES"

Lawrence cultivated his celebrity by allowing himself to be photographed and filmed by Lowell Thomas, but he later came to resent his worldwide fame

© Getty

believes this applies to the overall campaign rather than Tafila: "Lawrence's references to Tafila are more akin to the writings of [Prussian General] Carl von Clausewitz. However, the often mounted nature of the campaign no doubt appealed to his sense of the medieval. It's that almost romantic idea that there was a cause. Lawrence was in the land of the Crusaders and reliving that, although he was ironically operating with the descendants of the Saracens. Lieutenant CE Wood, who operated with Lawrence, reported that he sat in Qasr Azraq reading *Morte d'Arthur.* Azraq was a medieval fortress, which was everything that Lawrence would have wanted. But the less romantic picture is that Azraq was also the place where he temporarily gave up."

War criminal?

Although Lawrence later became a celebrity for his actions during World War I he was not well known in 1918 and the British and Arabs had different opinions of him. "He was known at British headquarters as a bit odd but they knew he was doing something that others didn't want to do," says Johnson. "Most British officers wanted to be in the main fight with the EEF, and even Allenby said no one else could have done it.

"Arab opinions on Lawrence are more complicated. Ibn Hussein remained distrustful of him and just viewed him as a liaison officer. Faisal remained positive until the end of the war but this had changed by the Cairo Conference of 1920. Faisal was now angry with the British and took it out on Lawrence, who wrote that he made 'hurtful remarks'. Conversely, Lawrence had meetings with Auda Abu Tayi, Sherif Nasir and Emir Zeid around the same time which appear to have gone okay. The overall verdict on Lawrence at that point was probably positive, although the narrative of betrayal emerged with the Arab nationalism of the 1930s-40s."

After Tafila, Arab forces continued to push north alongside the Allies towards Damascus during 1918. By September they were in Syria, but Lawrence became embroiled in one of the most controversial episodes of his career. He later wrote that a preceding Ottoman column had massacred civilians in the town of Tafas. The Arab irregulars took revenge by killing retreating Ottoman, German and Austrian soldiers. Lawrence recorded: "By my order we took no prisoners, for the only time in our war."

For Johnson, the grim events at Tafas are difficult to analyse: "It's very controversial because you have to ask if it actually happened. A Turkish historian, Mesut Uyar, has consulted many records and says (for example) that there were no substantial German forces in that area at that time. There were German contingents and it's likely they were caught up in the Ottoman withdrawal. There could have been Austrians too but they could have been mistaken for Germans. Did it happen? It may have done."

Another serious question is whether Lawrence committed a war crime by ordering no quarter. "Should soldiers be killed if they've been taken prisoner? The answer is no. On various grounds it would be a war crime because prisoners (regardless of who they are or what they've done) are accorded certain rights. However, if Arab forces had come across these atrocities it's very unlikely Lawrence could have stopped them killing those particular soldiers. He knew that the Arabs were not going to take prisoners, particularly with an Ottoman back record of atrocities. Is it a war crime under those conditions? Is Lawrence directly culpable? 'Indirectly' would be the fairest judgement. He

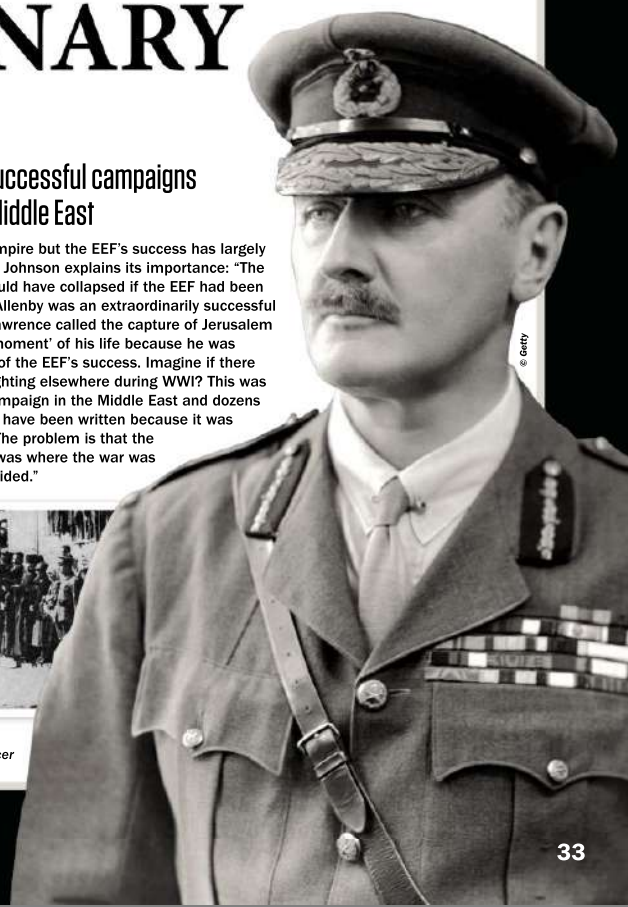
EGYPTIAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

This British-led Allied army conducted one of the most successful campaigns of World War I by destroying the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East

The EEF was a British Empire formation that was initially formed to push Ottoman forces out of the Sinai Peninsula. Commanded by General Edmund Allenby from June 1917, the EEF was a huge multinational force of British, Imperial, French and even Italian troops that outnumbered Ottoman forces and pushed into Palestine. The campaign was notable for its mobility in an overall static war. The EEF famously captured Jerusalem and won significant victories such as Megiddo.

The EEF captured Damascus in October 1918 after a lightning advance of 560km in a month, with the capture of 75,000 Ottoman prisoners for the loss of 5,000 men. The campaign's success led to the destruction of the Ottoman Empire but the EEF's success has largely been forgotten. Johnson explains its importance: "The Arab Revolt would have collapsed if the EEF had been defeated, and Allenby was an extraordinarily successful commander. Lawrence called the capture of Jerusalem the 'crowning moment' of his life because he was so enamoured of the EEF's success. Imagine if there had been no fighting elsewhere during WWI? This was a British-led campaign in the Middle East and dozens of books would have been written because it was so significant. The problem is that the Western Front was where the war was going to be decided."

Lawrence described Allenby as "physically large and confident, and morally so great that the comprehension of our littleness came slow to him"



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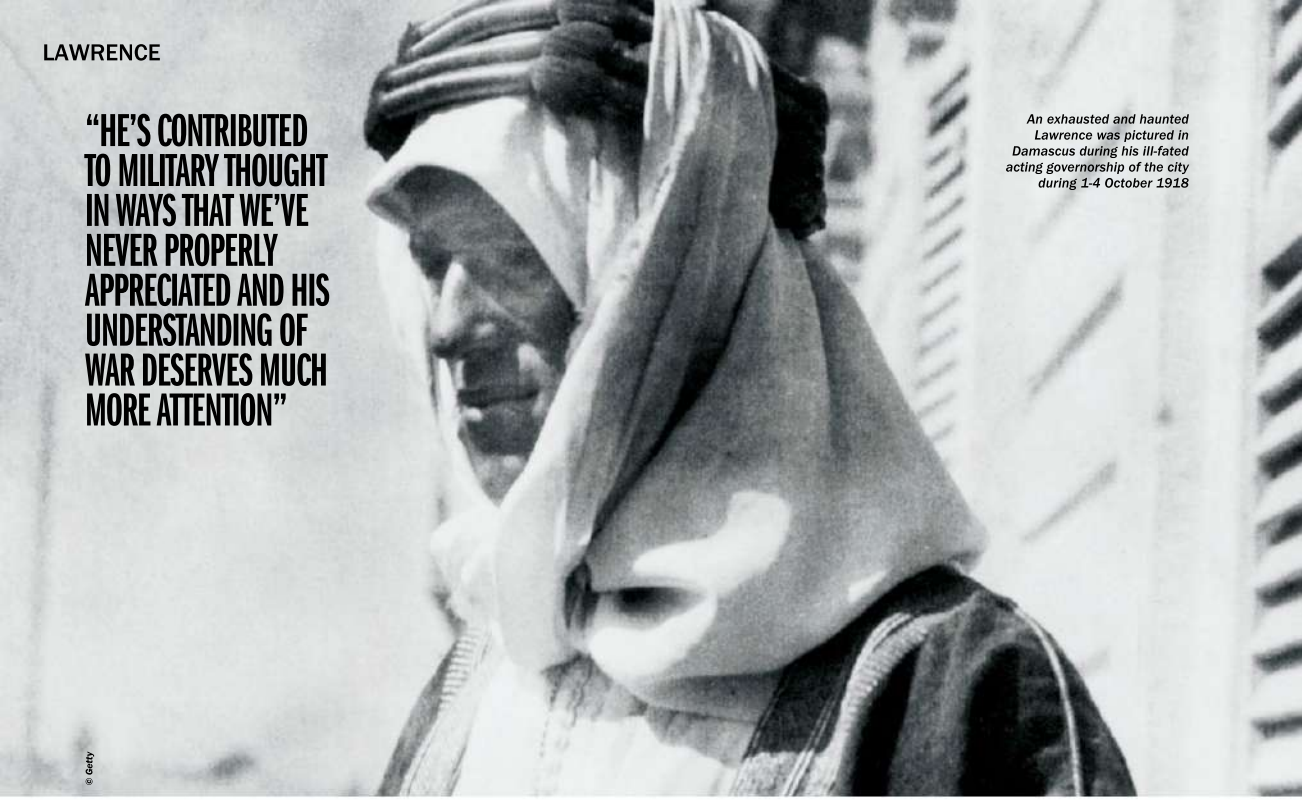
***Above:** Edmund Allenby entered Jerusalem on foot to show respect to the Holy City on 11 December 1917. Lawrence accompanied the general in his capacity as a British officer*



“HE’S CONTRIBUTED TO MILITARY THOUGHT IN WAYS THAT WE’VE NEVER PROPERLY APPRECIATED AND HIS UNDERSTANDING OF WAR DESERVES MUCH MORE ATTENTION”

An exhausted and haunted Lawrence was pictured in Damascus during his ill-fated acting governorship of the city during 1-4 October 1918

© Getty

should have advised but perhaps he didn’t and he possibly had the same mood as they did.”

Johnson believes Tafas demonstrates Lawrence’s increasing mental anguish: “It is shocking but things can go wrong in war and there is a decomposing of decency in some. Lawrence confessed that he no longer had a moral compass on certain issues. However, he confessed this because he wanted to be honest and tell us what war is like.”

Damascene debacle

Damascus was finally captured on 1 October 1918. It was the ultimate aim of the Arab Revolt but Australian soldiers actually entered the city first. Lawrence arrived on the same day and became acting governor of Damascus in an attempt to establish a provisional government for Faisal. To ensure that the Allies did not press their own imperial claims for control, Lawrence refused British help and disorder ensued. Johnson says: “Fighters can fight but can they govern? We have to say that when the Arab irregular force arrived it became absolute chaos. The Arabs didn’t want a modern administration and called on the original Ottoman administrators. Lawrence made it worse by refusing to accept British assistance, which could have saved the city from itself.”

The Arabs began fighting among themselves: “It got so bad that there was an attempted coup by Abdul el Kader, who had previously betrayed Lawrence and saw a chance to get rid of him, Faisal and the Arabs. Nuri al-Said and Lawrence set up machine guns all over the city centre. When the coup got underway Nuri opened fire and the rebels were shot down in the street. The media reported it very badly and accused the Arab fighters of a heinous crime without knowing the context.”

Eventually, Allenby imposed order: “He had promised Lawrence an administration but said, ‘Enough’ and moved in. Lawrence wrote that within ten minutes everything had been resolved, with British technical units restoring Damascus’s utilities. This explains Lawrence’s disappointment. He’d won militarily but most of the Arab fighters who had accompanied him to Damascus were leaving. Mostly Syrians were left to govern under Faisal but it wasn’t terribly successful. Nobody supported Faisal when the French later defeated the Syrian government at the Battle of Maysalun in 1920.”

‘Deeply courageous’

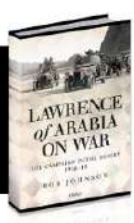
After just four days of attempting to govern Damascus, Lawrence left the city on 4 October 1918 a broken man. His dream of a united Arab state had been destroyed while the British and French carved up the Middle East between them. Nevertheless, his fame was only just beginning. American journalist Lowell Thomas soon turned Lawrence into an international celebrity and his fame has endured ever since.

Such is his legacy that during the 21st century wars in Afghanistan and Iraq Lawrence’s military writings were extensively studied by American forces. Johnson notes that this may have been counterproductive: “Lawrence’s contribution was Article 15 of his injunctions on how to work alongside Arabs. However, he was an insurgent commander and the irony is that American forces are counter-insurgents. Lawrence said that you can only understand locals if you study, work and live with them. Western forces in Afghanistan or Iraq were never fully embedded with Afghans or Iraqis but the real problems aren’t due to liaison – they’re down to political decision making.”

Johnson believes that Lawrence was a unique, brave but traumatised soldier: “He’s contributed to military thought in ways that we’ve never properly appreciated and his understanding of war deserves more attention. He was a very indifferent regular soldier but a very accomplished irregular fighter. Both he and the Arab irregulars didn’t like discipline but they did like the fluidity of movement and avoiding major threats to inflict damage.

“Finally, Lawrence was deeply courageous and pushed himself to absolute breaking point. What later happened to him in the 1920s was the product of that human breakdown. He was profoundly affected by war and tried, through his writings, to come to terms with the person he’d become. While serving in the lower ranks of the RAF and Tank Corps he wanted to get back to those fundamental aspects of soldiering rather than being a famous personality. He was broken but he’s a remarkable figure and continues to be appealing and well known. It’s not just because of filmmakers etc, because anyone who studies Lawrence finds something extraordinary in him.”

Dr Rob Johnson is the author of *Lawrence of Arabia on War: The Campaign in the Desert 1916-18*, which is published by Osprey Publishing. To purchase a copy visit: **www.ospreypublishing.com**



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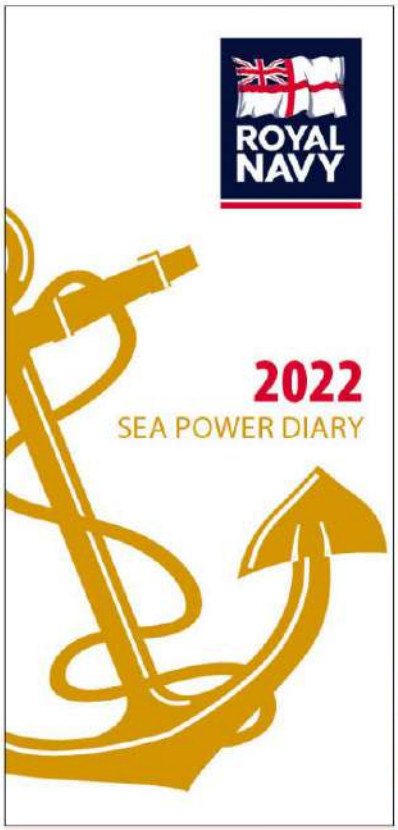

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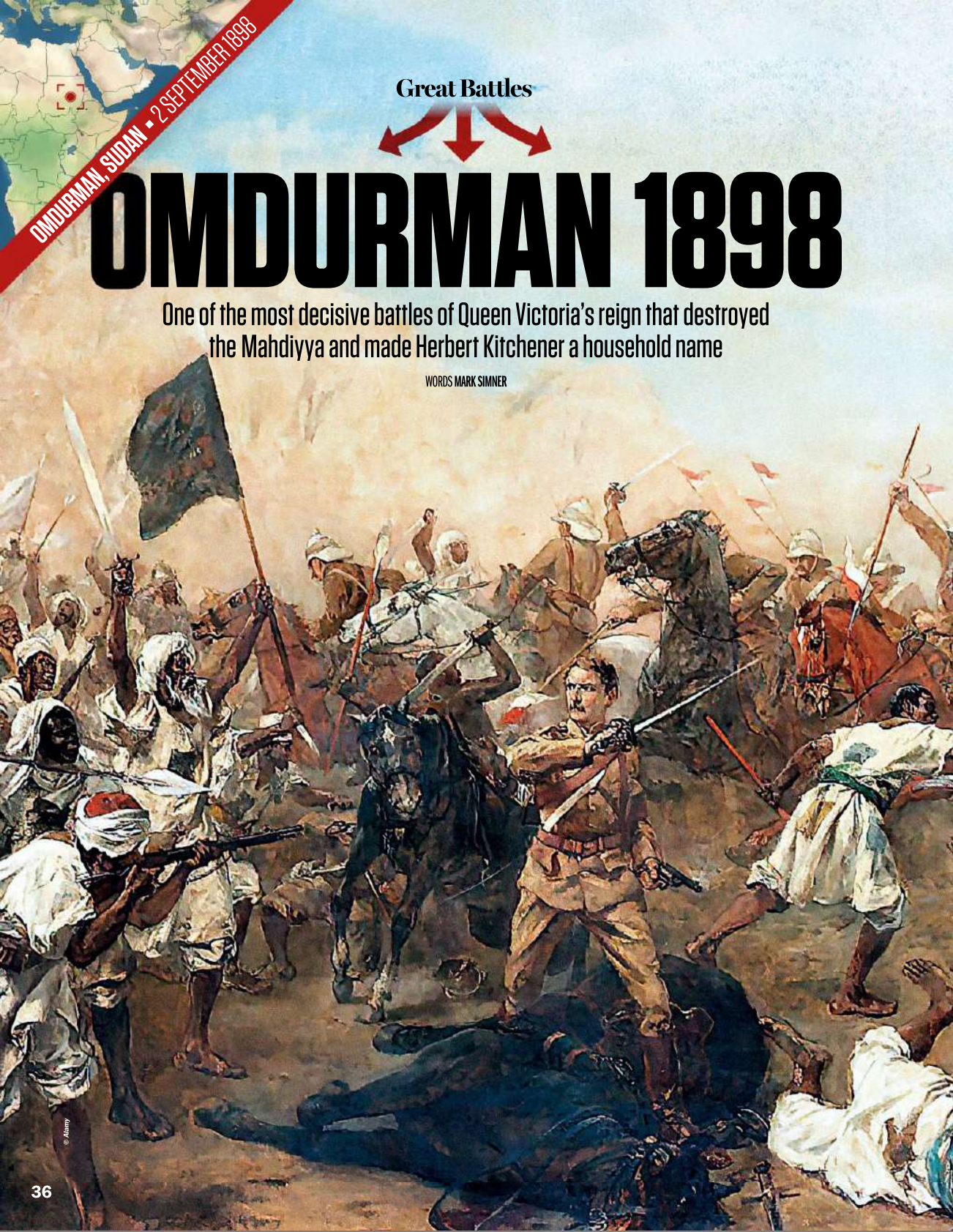
OMDURMAN 1898

One of the most decisive battles of Queen Victoria's reign that destroyed the Mahdiyya and made Herbert Kitchener a household name

WORDS **MARK SIMNER**



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On 26 January 1885 Major-General Charles 'Chinese' Gordon was killed as the Sudanese city of Khartoum fell to the Mahdists. When news of his death, and the failed expedition sent to save him, reached Britain, a wave of anguish swept through the British public. Newspapers demanding vengeance for this slain 'Christian martyr' landed with a heavy thud on Victorian breakfast tables, but it was not to be. British forces withdrew and political issues nearer home slowly drew attention away from Gordon's demise. Over a decade would pass before Khartoum would be retaken and the Mahdists destroyed.

Britain's involvement in Sudan had come in the wake of the 1882 invasion of Egypt. London had initially been reluctant to intervene militarily in Egypt but felt compelled to act following a nationalistic coup mounted by the Egyptian Army. Similarly, the British Government had little desire to involve itself in the affairs of Sudan. Yet Sudan had been governed by Egypt since the early 19th century and Egypt's problems with its southern neighbour became Britain's problems by default.

The proposed solution came in the form of Gordon, whom Cairo believed was the man to evacuate Khartoum. Although welcomed by its inhabitants, Gordon became cut off in the city and surrounded by Mahdist forces. Reluctantly the British Government authorised an expedition led by Garnet Wolseley to rescue him, but Wolseley failed to reach the city in time to save his friend.

Shortly after Gordon's death, the Mahdi also died and was succeeded by Abdallāhi ibn Mohammed Al-Khalifa. The Khalifa, as he was known, consolidated the Mahdist regime and established a civil and military administration that encompassed many different peoples stretched out over almost a million square miles. Abdallāhi would prove to be ruthless and able but lacked the charisma of his predecessor.

Life in the Mahdist state was harsh, but this was of little concern to Lord Salisbury, who had returned as British prime minister in June 1895. What was of

The Battle of Omdurman saw an Anglo-Egyptian force defeat the Mahdist regime in Sudan

OPPOSING FORCES

ANGLO-EGYPTIAN

LEADER
Major-General Herbert Kitchener

TROOPS
8,200 British
17,600 Egyptian

ARTILLERY
44 guns
20 Maxims

NAVAL
10 steamers with 36 guns & 24 Maxims

VS

MAHDIST (ANSAR)

LEADER
Abdallāhi ibn Mohammed Al-Khalifa

TROOPS
50,000+

ARTILLERY
Unknown

concern was the disastrous defeat inflicted by the Abyssinians on an Italian army in Ethiopia at the Battle of Adowa in March 1896. The Italian garrison at Kassala in eastern Sudan found itself vulnerable and the Mahdists prepared to attack. Rome pleaded with London to mount a military diversion, to which Salisbury agreed, albeit a limited campaign in the northern Sundanese province of Dongola. No reconquest of Sudan or avenging of Gordon was intended at this stage but the political and military wheels were firmly in motion.

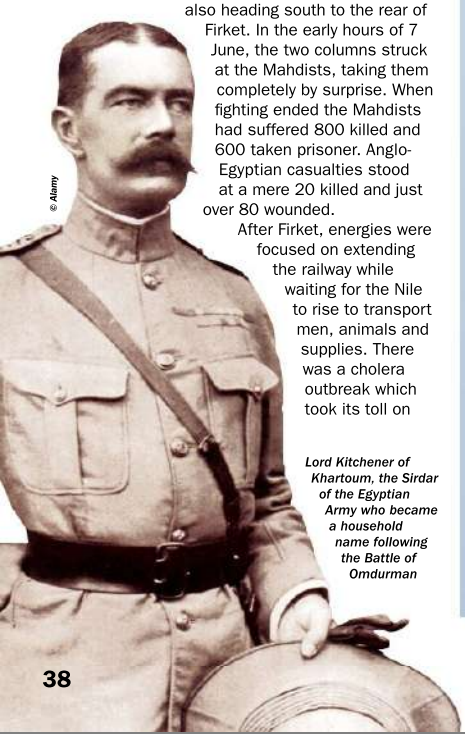
Campaign in Sudan

Following their occupation of Egypt, the British reorganised and trained a new Egyptian army. In 1896 the commander-in-chief of this force, known as the Sirdar, was Colonel (soon to be Major-General) Horatio Herbert Kitchener. For the coming Dongola campaign Kitchener would have available 9,000 Egyptian troops and 520 men of the North Staffordshire Regiment. Opposing him was a Mahdist force of 10,000 in Dongola, with around 3,000 at Firket.

By 20 March, an advanced base had been established at the village of Akasha, which was a short distance from Firket. Three battalions of Egyptian infantry were assembled at Akasha under Colonel Archibald Hunter. Meanwhile, Kitchener exerted his considerable organisational skills and ensured supplies were moved up. To assist in this challenging task the Sirdar restored the existing local railway and extended it, itself a formidable feat led by Lieutenant Percy Girouard, a Canadian-born railway builder.

For the assault on Firket, Kitchener divided his forces into a River Column and a Desert Column. The former was commanded by Hunter and the latter by Major John F Burn-Murdoch. The River Column moved south while the Desert Column swung out to the east before also heading south to the rear of Firket. In the early hours of 7 June, the two columns struck at the Mahdists, taking them completely by surprise. When fighting ended the Mahdists had suffered 800 killed and 600 taken prisoner. Anglo-Egyptian casualties stood at a mere 20 killed and just over 80 wounded.

After Firket, energies were focused on extending the railway while waiting for the Nile to rise to transport men, animals and supplies. There was a cholera outbreak which took its toll on



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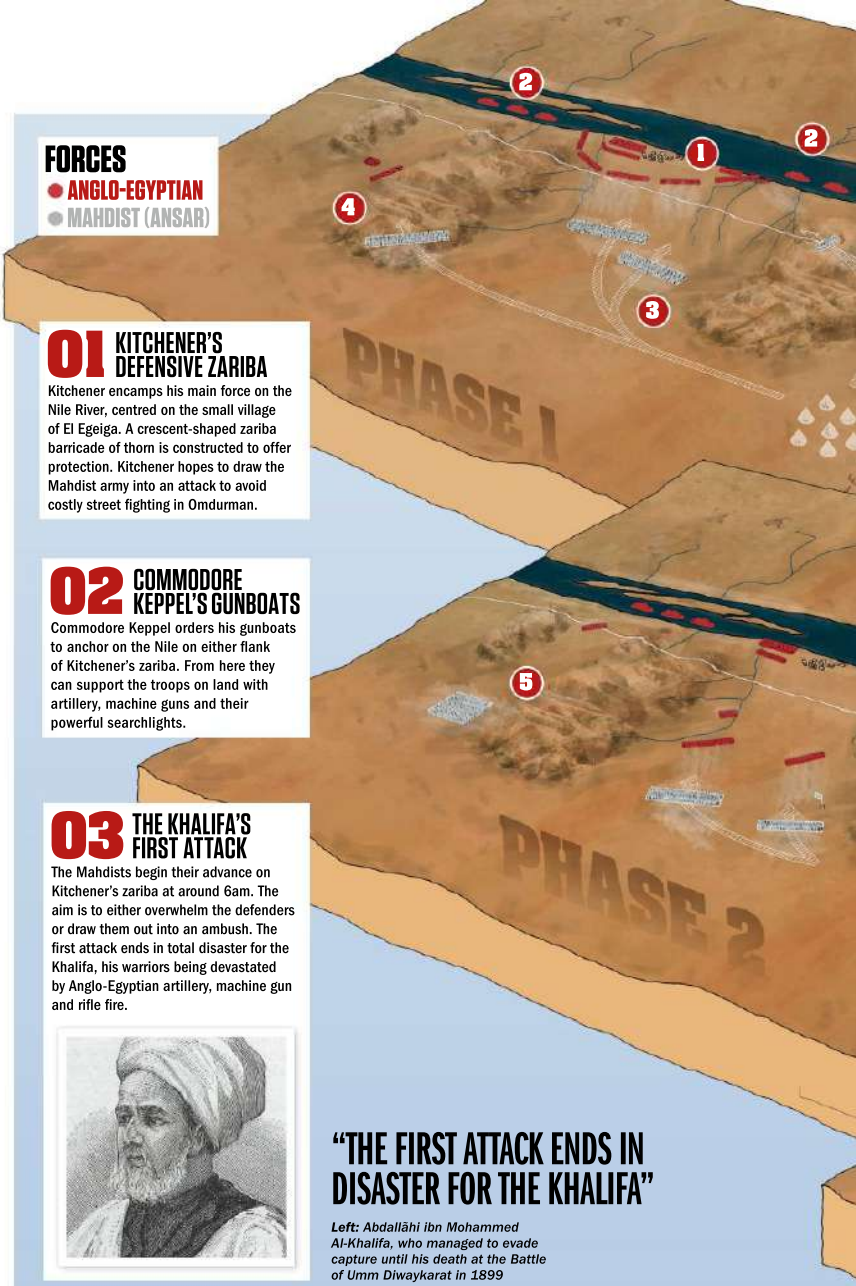
Lord Kitchener of Khartoum, the Sirdar of the Egyptian Army who became a household name following the Battle of Omdurman



01 KITCHENER'S DEFENSIVE ZARIBA

Kitchener encamps his main force on the Nile River, centred on the small village of El Egeiga. A crescent-shaped zariba barricade of thorn is constructed to offer protection. Kitchener hopes to draw the Mahdist army into an attack to avoid costly street fighting in Omdurman.

02 COMMODORE KEPPEL'S GUNBOATS

Commodore Keppel orders his gunboats to anchor on the Nile on either flank of Kitchener's zariba. From here they can support the troops on land with artillery, machine guns and their powerful searchlights.

03 THE KHALIFA'S FIRST ATTACK

The Mahdists begin their advance on Kitchener's zariba at around 6am. The aim is to either overwhelm the defenders or draw them out into an ambush. The first attack ends in total disaster for the Khalifa, his warriors being devastated by Anglo-Egyptian artillery, machine gun and rifle fire.

"THE FIRST ATTACK ENDS IN DISASTER FOR THE KHALIFA"

***Left:** Abdallāhi ibn Mohammed Al-Khalifa, who managed to evade capture until his death at the Battle of Umm Diwaykarat in 1899*

04 FIGHT IN THE KERRERI HILLS

Egyptian cavalry and Camel Corps become hotly engaged with 15,000 warriors of the Dark Green Flag in the Kerreri Hills. Broadwood's cavalry attempt to draw off the attackers while the Camel Corps heads for the zariba. Once in range, Keppel's gunboats shell the pursuing Mahdists and break them up.

05 CHARGE OF THE 21ST LANCERS

During Kitchener's advance on Omdurman the 21st Lancers come under fire from several hundred Mahdists in a khor. Colonel Martin orders a charge, but it becomes apparent over 2,000 warriors are hidden in a depression. Brutal fighting ensues, during which the lancers suffer substantial casualties among both men and horses.

A depiction of Sudanese cavalry charging British lines, Battle of Omdurman

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06 BLACK FLAG ATTACK ON MACDONALD

The Anglo-Egyptian Army advances on Omdurman in echelon. Two British brigades race ahead while the Egyptian brigades struggle to keep up, leading to a gap over 1km wide forming in the line. Macdonald's 1st Egyptian Brigade comes under attack from 15,000 warriors of the Black Flag led by Ya'kub.

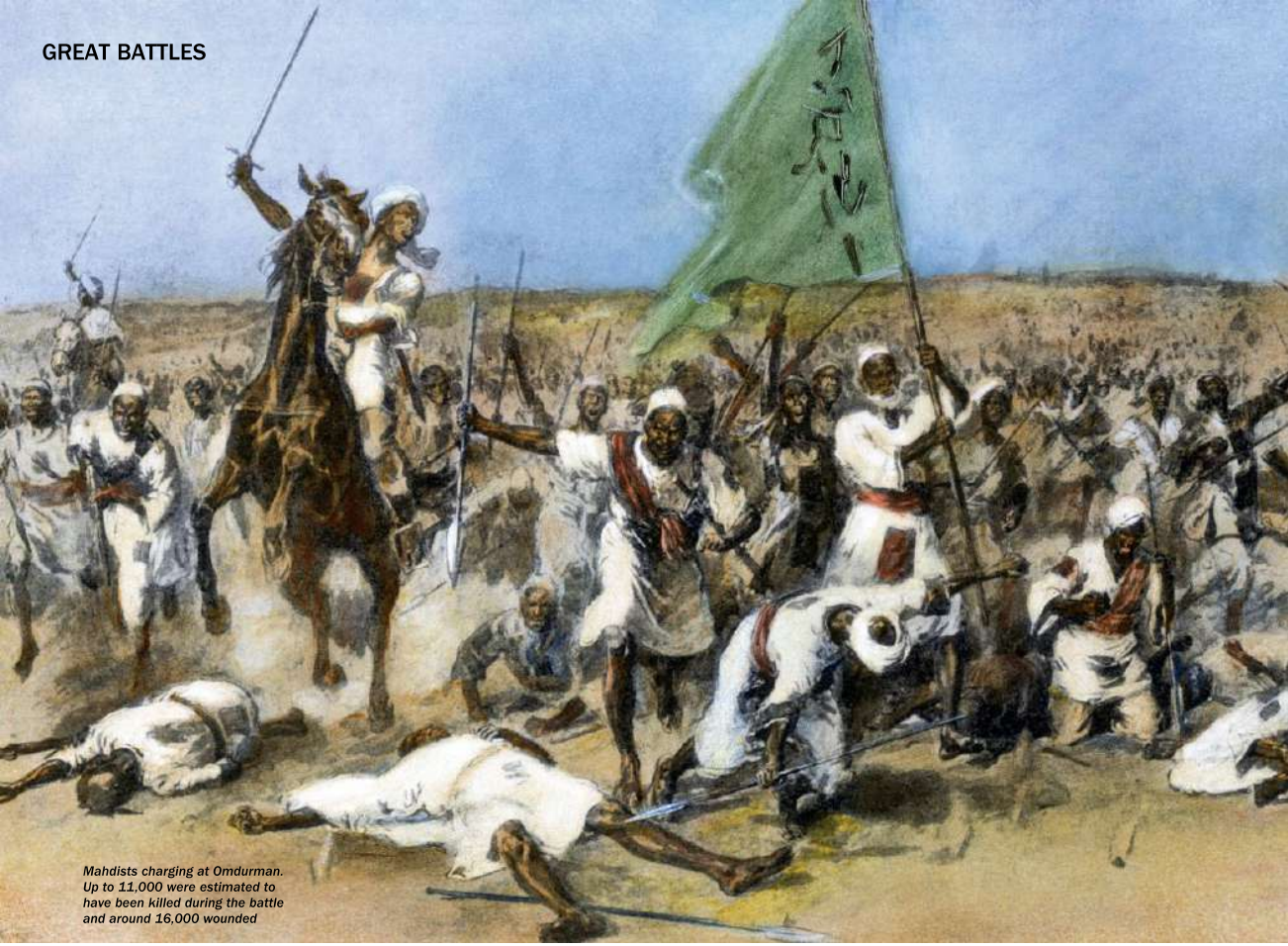
07 GREEN FLAG ATTACK ON MACDONALD

The Green Flags led by Ali-Wad-Helu attack Macdonald's brigade in the rear from the Kerreri Hills. The attack comes too late to coincide with the Black Flag attack, giving Macdonald precious moments to wheel his men 90 degrees to meet the new assault. The attack is defeated.

08 BAGGARA ATTACK ON MACDONALD

A group of 500 mounted Baggara make a desperate last ditch charge on Macdonald's lines but are mowed down by murderous Egyptian fire. Kitchener resumes his advance to Omdurman at 11.30am. The Mahdist army is routed, and the Battle of Omdurman ends in victory for Kitchener's forces.

Map illustrations: Richard Thomson



Mahdists charging at Omdurman. Up to 11,000 were estimated to have been killed during the battle and around 16,000 wounded

the troops and bad weather hampered work on the railway. Nevertheless, Kitchener's men entered Dongola unopposed on 23 September. Construction of the all-important Sudan Military Railway continued apace.

On 29 July 1897, Hunter advanced on Abu Hamed, night-marching almost 200km in just seven days. On 7 August he ordered a preparatory bombardment followed by an assault. The 700-strong Mahdist garrison was destroyed while Hunter lost only 18 killed and just over 60 wounded.

It was at this point that a full reconquest of Sudan and destruction of the Mahdists was authorised. Kitchener was reinforced, receiving thousands of British troops. These included four infantry battalions: the Lincolnshires, Warwickshires, Cameron Highlanders and Seaforth Highlanders, which together formed 1st British Brigade. In total Kitchener had 10,000 British and Egyptian infantry, 500 cavalry, 5,000 mounted Baggara and 24 guns. His next target was on the Atbara River, where Mahdist forces under Ahmad Mahmud had encamped at Nakheila.

The Battle of Atbara took place on 8 April 1898 in what would be the second-largest action of the campaign. At 6.15am an artillery bombardment was unleashed on Mahmud, followed by an infantry assault and brutal hand-to-hand fighting. So savage was the action that, as the Warwickshires entered the Mahdist zariba, an officer heard someone cry: "Now you're into them Warwickshire lads. Stick every mother's son." The Mahdists were dealt a heavy defeat, this time losing 3,000 killed. However, Kitchener's casualties were also high, at over 560 killed or wounded.

Another pause in the fighting occurred while Fort Atbara was established as an advanced base and the railway further extended. Again, Kitchener had to wait for the Nile to rise for his gunboats to get over the Sixth Cataract. More reinforcements arrived, including battalions of the Grenadier Guards, Northumberland Fusiliers, Rifle Brigade and Lancashire Fusiliers, collectively forming 2nd British Brigade. Additional artillery, Maxim guns, and the 21st Lancers also joined. Kitchener now had over 25,000 men for his final and devastating showdown with the Khalifa's forces at what would become known as the Battle of Omdurman.

Prelude to battle

By September Kitchener was ready to face the main Mahdist army. At his disposal he had the British Infantry Division under Major-General William Forbes Gatacre, which was made up of 1st Brigade (under Brigadier-General Andrew Gilbert Wauchope) and 2nd Brigade (under Brigadier-General Neville Lyttelton). The Egyptian Division was commanded by Major-General Archibald Hunter and consisted of four brigades: 1st Brigade (Brigadier-General Hector MacDonald); 2nd Brigade (Colonel John Grenfell Maxwell); 3rd Brigade (Colonel DF Lewis); and 4th Brigade (Lieutenant-Colonel John Collinson). In addition were the mounted troops, consisting of four British squadrons of the 21st Lancers, nine squadrons of Egyptian cavalry and eight companies of the Camel Corps. The Anglo-Egyptian artillery was commanded by Colonel Charles Long, while the naval contingent of ten gunboats came under Commodore Colin Keppel.

Commanding the Mahdist army was the Khalifa himself, who divided his force into

"BY 8AM THE INITIAL MAHDIST ATTACK WAS AT AN END. IT HAD BEEN AN UTTER DISASTER. THOUSANDS HAD BECOME CASUALTIES AND NONE HAD MANAGED TO REACH THE ZARIBA"

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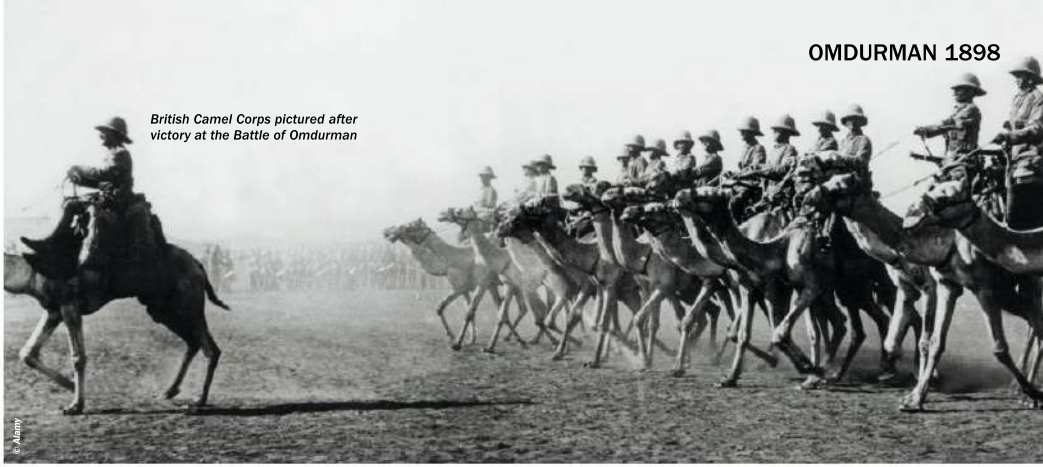
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British Camel Corps pictured after victory at the Battle of Omdurman

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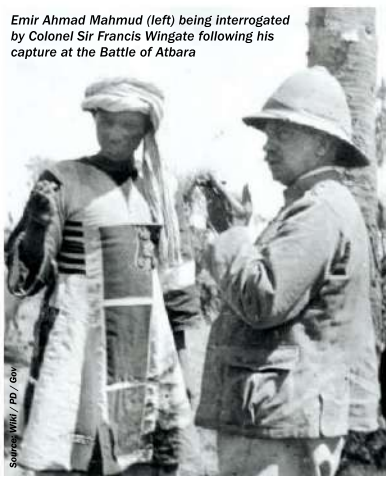
The charge of the 21st Lancers at Omdurman. The cavalrymen lost 21 killed and 50 wounded during the attack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Emir Ahmad Mahmud (left) being interrogated by Colonel Sir Francis Wingate following his capture at the Battle of Atbara

the following divisions: the Dark Green Flag, the Black Flag, the Bright Green Flag and the Red Flag. Other Mahdist forces present included those commanded by Osman Digna and Osman Azrak. In total it is estimated the Khalifa fielded over 50,000 warriors during the battle.

Kitchener reviewed his army on 23 August at Wad Hamed. From here the Sirdar advanced in the direction of Omdurman, reaching a village called El Egeiga on the Nile on 1 September. Here, a mere 10km from Omdurman, the Anglo-Egyptian troops constructed a crescent-shaped defensive thorn zariba. The Sirdar was keen to avoid bloody street fighting in the city and instead hoped to lure the Mahdists into an attack.

A reconnaissance was mounted by the Egyptian cavalry while Keppel's gunboats moved up the Nile. At 11am the cavalry spotted in the distance a 6km-long line of Mahdist warriors advancing in their direction. They had found the main Mahdist army.

Meanwhile, Keppel's gunboats had been engaging Mahdist batteries on both banks of the Nile near Omdurman. Each was destroyed in turn before Keppel turned his guns on the walls of the city. A force of Arab irregulars under Major Stuart Wortley also advanced up the east bank of the river and assaulted several forts. Once these were cleared the gunboats landed a battery of howitzers under Major FB Elmslie, who commenced fire on the city. During this bombardment it is said the dome of the Mahdi's tomb was damaged by a lyddite shell.

Suddenly the cavalry, which had fallen back in face of a Mahdist attack, arrived back at the zariba and reported the Khalifa was about to launch an assault. Kitchener's men prepared themselves for the attack, but it did not come. The Mahdists had settled down for the night and the battle would have to wait until the following day.

The Battle of Omdurman

As morning on 2 September broke, Kitchener ordered his men to stand-to. The cavalry had already departed the zariba, the 21st Lancers heading for the Jebel Surgham ridge, which they reached at 5.45am. Meanwhile the Egyptian cavalry, the Camel Corps, and the Horse Artillery made for the Kerreri Hills. Soon the lancers could see thousands of Mahdist warriors moving en mass towards Kitchener's zariba, in what must have been an awe-inspiring sight.

The Khalifa's plan was to send forward a wave of warriors under Osman Azrak and Ibrahim al Khalil and assault the front and left flank of Kitchener's line. If the attack was repulsed Azrak was tasked with conducting a withdrawal in such a way as to encourage the Anglo-Egyptian troops to give pursuit, drawing them out beyond the range of the guns of their gunboats, where another force in reserve would be ready to ambush them. Osman Digna was instructed to block the route to Omdurman.

Kitchener described the opening of the battle: "At 6.40am the shouts of the advancing Dervish army became audible and a few minutes later their flags appeared over the rising ground, forming a semicircle round our left and front faces. The guns of the 32nd Field Battery opened fire at 6.45am at a range of 2,800 yards [2,560m], and the Dervishes, continuing to advance rapidly, delivered their attack with all their accustomed dash and intrepidity."

Despite the shelling, the Khalifa's warriors pushed on but soon came under fire from the Maxims at 1,555m. At 1,370m the British infantry began pouring rifle volleys onto their attackers. Lieutenant Meiklejohn of the Warwicks recalled: "Then the order came to open 'Company volleys' and I think the opening range was 1,500 yards [1,370m]. A volume of fire burst out from the whole length of the zariba. Continual repetition on my part of the words of command: 'Ready, present, fire. Ready…' in this rhythm, only varied by a shortening range."

By the time the Mahdists got within around 730m the combined artillery, machine gun and

Men of the Cameron Highlanders assaulting the Mahdist camp during the Battle of Atbara, 8 April 1898

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Charge of the 21st Lancers at the Battle of Omdurman

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rifle fire was cutting swathes through the ranks of their warriors. By 8am the initial Mahdist attack was at an end. It had been an utter disaster – thousands had become casualties and none had managed to reach the zariba.

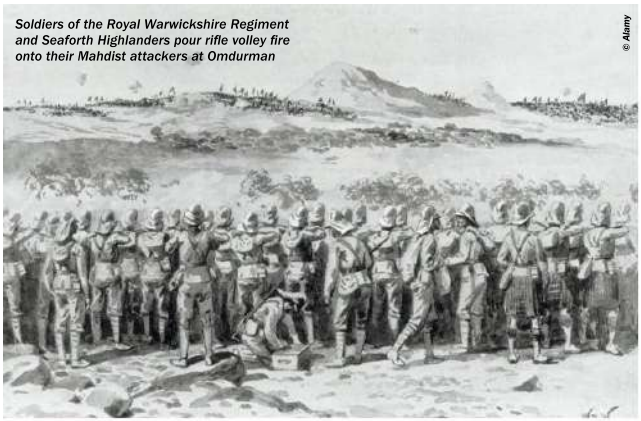
Meanwhile, up in the Kerreri Hills the Anglo-Egyptian cavalry and Camel Corps were having a harder time of it. They had become hotly engaged with 15,000 warriors of the Dark Green Flag. Lieutenant-Colonel RG Broadwood attempted to draw off the Mahdists with his cavalrymen while the slower-moving Camel Corps made for the safety of the zariba. Mounted Mahdists pursued the latter and kept them under pressure, but when they came into range the guns of Keppel's gunboats began shelling the warriors and broke them up.

With the Mahdist army now seemingly in disorder, Kitchener ordered his troops to advance on the city of Omdurman itself. Ahead of the main force the 21st Lancers moved to clear the route to the city, but they were soon to experience disaster. Having been fired upon by what looked like several hundred Mahdists in a nearby khor (dry watercourse), Colonel Rowland Hill Martin ordered his regiment to charge. As the cavalrymen thundered their way to the khor it became evident that the lancers were in fact about to smash their way into a much stronger force of over 2,000 Mahdists who had been hidden in a depression. It is said that at the moment the lancers hit the Mahdist line the cavalrymen let out a loud roar while the warriors shouted "Allahu Akbar!"

Fierce close-quarter fighting ensued. Lances shattered on impact with their targets while men and horses crashed to the ground. Participating in the charge was Lieutenant Nevill Smyth: "Every side a compact mass of white robed men, apparently countless, still firing and waving swords. Find myself at nullah … Am met by swordsman on foot. Cuts at my right front. I guard it with sword. Next, man with fat face, all in white having fired, missed me, throws up both hands. I cut him across face. He drops. Large bearded man in blue, with two edged sword and two hands cuts at me. Think this time I must be done for but pace tells and my guard carries it off. Duck my head to spear thrown which just misses me. Another cut at my horse, miss guard, but luckily cut is too far away and only cuts through my breastplate and gives my horse a small flesh wound on neck and shoulder. Then I remember no more till I find myself outside with four or five of my troop."

Once through the mass of Mahdists a number of the surviving lancers managed to reform, draw their carbines and break up

"…AM MET BY SWORDSMAN ON FOOT. CUTS AT MY RIGHT FRONT. I GUARD IT WITH SWORD. NEXT, MAN WITH FAT FACE, ALL IN WHITE HAVING FIRED, MISSED ME, THROWS UP BOTH HANDS. I CUT HIM ACROSS FACE…"


Soldiers of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment and Seaforth Highlanders pour rifle volley fire onto their Mahdist attackers at Omdurman

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The charge of the 21st Lancers is considered to be one of the last charges by British cavalry

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A triumphant Kitchener enters Khartoum following the battle, almost 14 years after it fell to the Mahdists and Gordon's death

© Alamy

the enemy force with small arms fire. Of the 320 who charged, 21 lancers were killed and another 50 were wounded. The 21st also lost 119 horses killed or wounded. They had achieved little and become virtually combat ineffective. Nevertheless, three men of the regiment would subsequently receive the Victoria Cross for their bravery.

Meanwhile, Kitchener's advance on Omdurman was conducted in echelon with the two British brigades racing ahead on the left, both vying to be the first to reach the city. This competition to be first led to a 1.5km-wide gap developing in the line as the middle Egyptian brigades were unable to keep up. Macdonald's 1st Egyptian Brigade became exposed on its right flank, a vulnerability the Mahdists sought to exploit. The Black Flag attacked but Macdonald wheeled his infantrymen ready to receive them and, despite immense pressure, was able to maintain a steady fire on his attackers.

Lieutenant HL Pritchard of the Royal Engineers recalled the final demise of the Black Flag attack: "The Khalifa's bodyguard had died to a man round his black flag, the last man standing by it continuing to fire on our battalions till he fell. The ground for yards round the flag was piled with corpses, and the flag was guarded only by dead men when our men reached it."

With the Black Flag dealt with, Macdonald coolly ordered his men to wheel 90 degrees to receive an oncoming attack by the Green Flags. Reinforcements in the form of the Lincolns appeared and the Green Flags were similarly destroyed. According to Private George Teigh of the Lincolns: "It was between five and ten hundred yards we were firing. We fixed bayonets and fired about 30 volleys and then we advanced again across the battlefield."

At around 11.30am the battle came to an end. Kitchener pushed on for the city, which was entered via a gate on its eastern side as well as through several breaches previously made by the gunboats. The Khalifa, knowing he was defeated, ordered his men to make for the city and defend it. However, few followed his orders, preferring to run off to save their lives. Abdallāhi had little choice but to flee, making off on a donkey with a small escort. Later he switched to a camel and made good his escape.

Aftermath

The Battle of Omdurman ended with the loss 48 killed and 382 wounded for the Anglo-Egyptian force. Mahdist loses were estimated at almost 11,000 killed and around another 16,000 wounded, while 5,000 were taken prisoner. There would be controversy over the British handling of the Mahdist wounded and Kitchener's orders for the destruction of the Mahdi's tomb. Nevertheless, it was received as a great victory back home in Britain and made Kitchener a household name.

The Fashoda Incident later in 1898 would soon follow Kitchener's triumph, when a confrontation between his forces and a French expedition at Fashoda in southern Sudan led to a war-scare between Britain and France. There was also the unfinished business of apprehending the Khalifa, who continued to evade capture. Eventually he would be found and killed by an Egyptian column under the command of Reginald Wingate at the Battle of Umm Diwaykarat on 25 November 1899.

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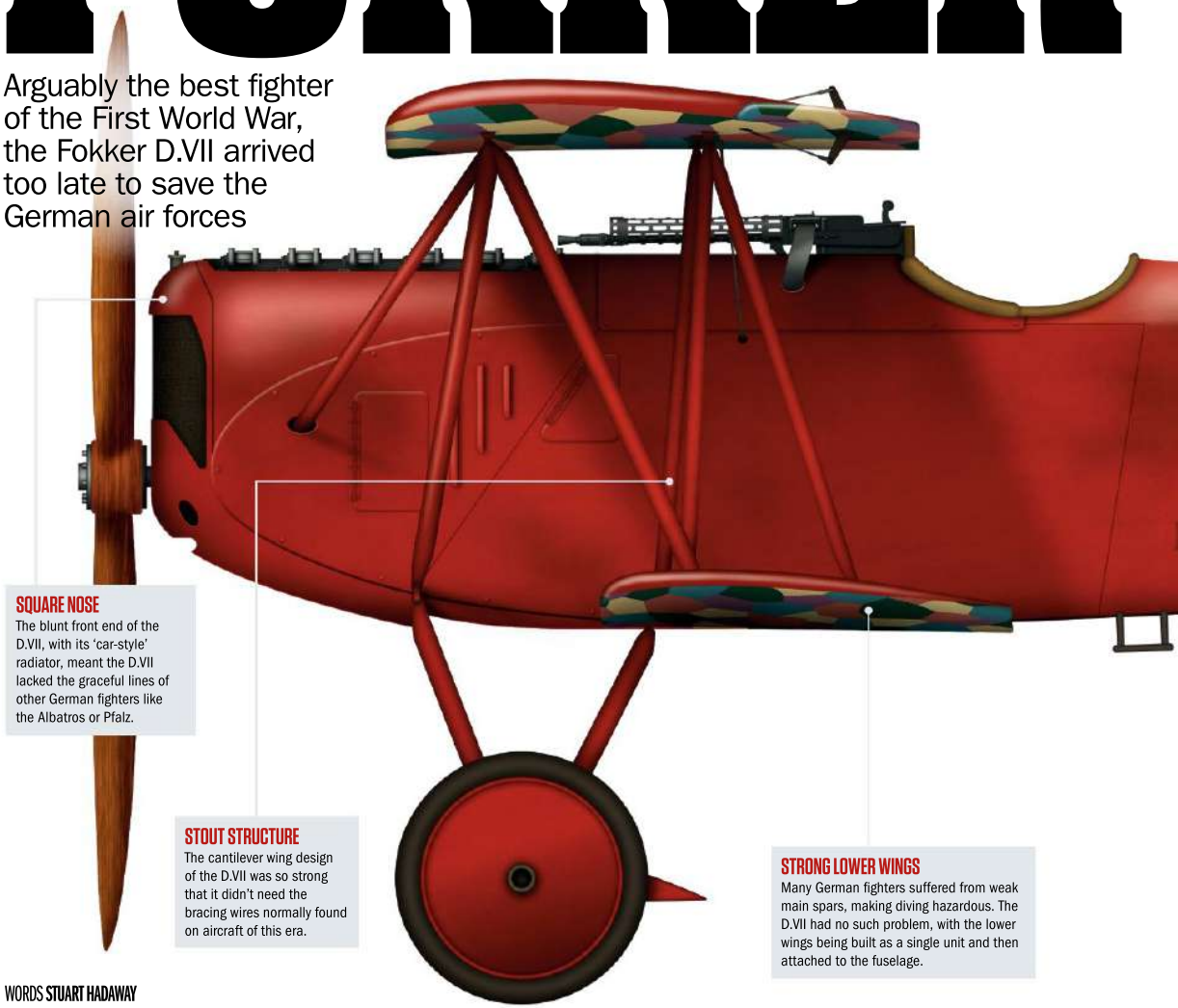
FOKKER

Arguably the best fighter of the First World War, the Fokker D.VII arrived too late to save the German air forces



SQUARE NOSE
The blunt front end of the D.VII, with its 'car-style' radiator, meant the D.VII lacked the graceful lines of other German fighters like the Albatros or Pfalz.

STOUT STRUCTURE
The cantilever wing design of the D.VII was so strong that it didn't need the bracing wires normally found on aircraft of this era.

STRONG LOWER WINGS
Many German fighters suffered from weak main spars, making diving hazardous. The D.VII had no such problem, with the lower wings being built as a single unit and then attached to the fuselage.

WORDS **STUART HADAWAY**

The Fokker D.VII was one of the best, some would say the best, fighter aircraft of World War I. It was fast, manoeuvrable and a forgiving aircraft to fly, and it didn't suffer from the structural problems that plagued many other German fighters. It could be placed in the hands of a novice and perform well, while in the hands of an expert it was truly formidable.

Designed by Reinhold Platz, Chief Designer at the Fokker works, the already excellent aircraft was further refined by Anthony Fokker. The metal tubular frame gave it strength, and its docile stall characteristics allowed a pilot to 'hang on his prop' at the top of a climb for precious seconds, remaining in control when most other aircraft would have already fallen into a spin.

So feared was the Fokker D.VII that when the First World War ended the victorious Allies included a term in the peace treaty that 1,700 of them had to be handed over. Intended to strip the Germans of a valuable asset, this stipulation paradoxically led to the aircraft remaining in production in Germany until well into 1919, while Fokker later managed to continue production in his native Netherlands.

D.VII

FOKKER D.VII

COMMISSIONED:	1918
ORIGIN:	GERMANY
LENGTH:	7M (23FT)
WINGSPAN:	8.9M (29FT)
ENGINE:	138KW (185HP) BMW IN-LINE AIR-COOLED
CREW:	1
PRIMARY WEAPON:	2 X SPANDAU LMG08/15 7.92MM MACHINE GUNS

Illustration: Battlefield Design

"SO FEARED WAS THE FOKKER D.VII THAT WHEN THE FIRST WORLD WAR ENDED THE VICTORIOUS ALLIES INCLUDED A TERM IN THE PEACE TREATY THAT 1,700 OF THEM HAD TO BE HANDED OVER"

RED BARON'S RECOMMENDATION

The triangular portion of the tail was added after test flights by Manfred von Richthofen, aka the Red Baron. The fuselage was also lengthened to improve directional control, especially in a dive.

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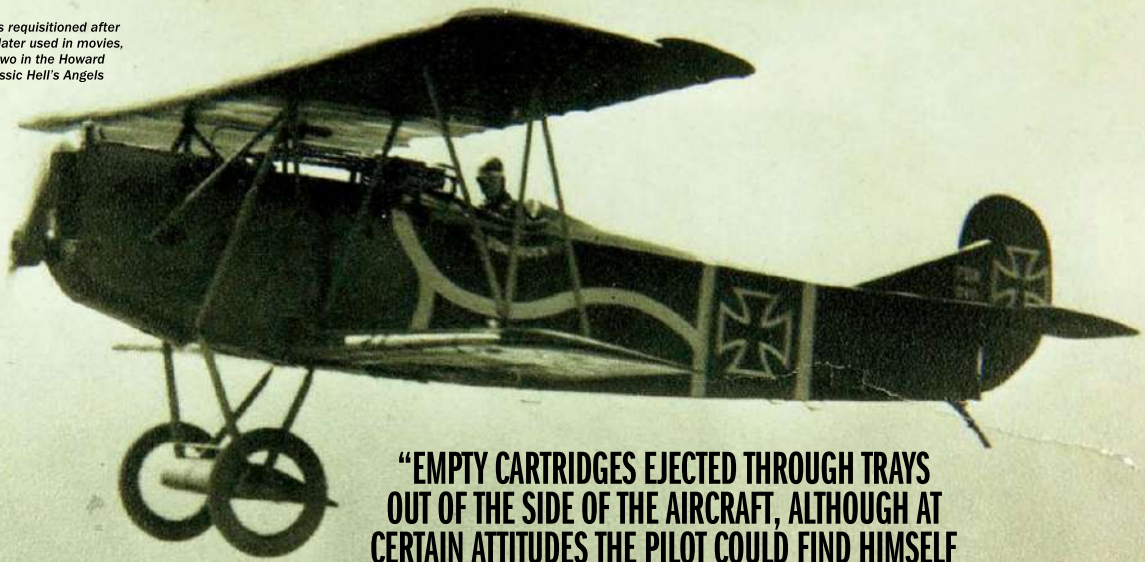
A flight of D.VIIs being readied for a sortie

***Top:** Anthony Fokker test flying one of his D.VIIs* ***Above:** A D.VII in flight*

Some D.VIIs requisitioned after WWI were later used in movies, like these two in the Howard Hughes classic Hell's Angels

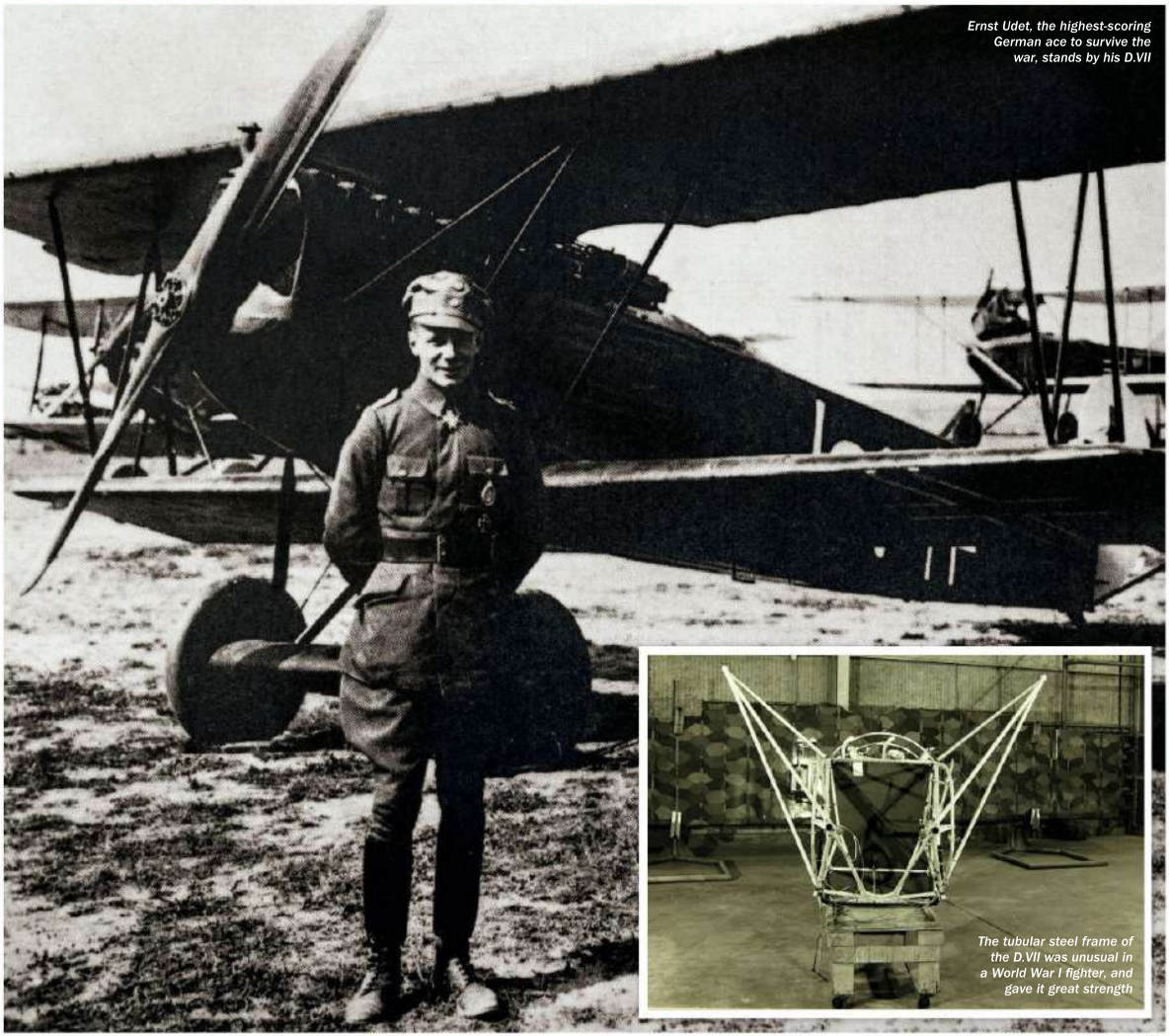


"EMPTY CARTRIDGES EJECTED THROUGH TRAYS OUT OF THE SIDE OF THE AIRCRAFT, ALTHOUGH AT CERTAIN ATTITUDES THE PILOT COULD FIND HIMSELF BEING SHOWERED IN THE HOT BRASS CASINGS"

Right and below: *The twin Spandau LMG08/15s, with their belt-feed trays clearly visible. The ammunition containers, just behind the engine, were prone to overheating*

ARMAMENT

The D.VII had two LMG08/55 7.92mm belt-fed air-cooled machine guns. Containers held 500 rounds per gun, but their position just behind the engine led to several incidents early in its service where heated ammunition exploded. Empty belts were fed into another container on the other side of the gun and empty cartridges ejected through trays out of the side of the aircraft, although at certain attitudes the pilot could find himself being showered in the hot brass casings.



Ernst Udet, the highest-scoring German ace to survive the war, stands by his D.VII

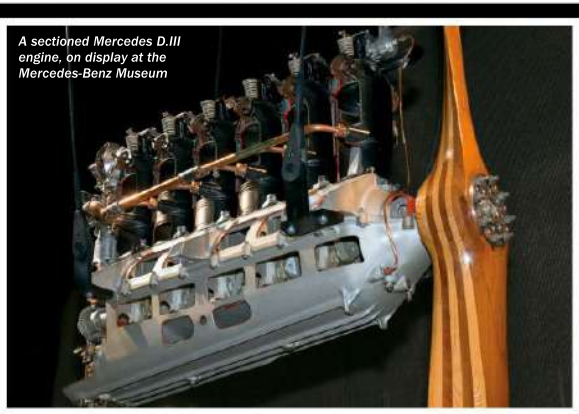
The tubular steel frame of the D.VII was unusual in a World War I fighter, and gave it great strength

DESIGN

The fuselage, tail and tailplanes of the Fokker D.VII used welded steel frames covered in fabric, making the aircraft both light and strong. Forward of the cockpit and the leading edges of the wings were covered in metal sheets, while the wings themselves were wooden framed. The lower wing was a cantilever design, with the wing built in one piece without the usual main spar. This design meant the Fokker didn't need bracing wires.

ENGINE

The D.VII was originally fitted with the 134kW (180hp) Mercedes D.IIIa and D.IIIau, but some of these were later replaced by a 138kW (185hp) BMW D.IIIa engine. Both were six cylinder in-line water-cooled engines, but the BMW was 'over-pressured' with higher compression and an altitude-adjusting carburettor. This gave it an extra boost, but at low altitudes (below 2000m/6,600ft) it could be dangerous, with a risk of significant engine damage. The BMW-equipped types were designated Fokker D.VII(F).



A sectioned Mercedes D.III engine, on display at the Mercedes-Benz Museum

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"IT WAS FAST, MANOEUVRABLE, EASY TO FLY AND DEADLY EVEN IN RELATIVELY INEXPERIENCED HANDS"

The cockpit of the Fokker D.VII, with the tachometer prominent between the gun butts

COCKPIT

The open cockpit of the Fokker D.VII was typical of fighters in the World War I era, but with the exception that it was large enough for the pilot to wear a parachute, which was just being introduced for German aircraft crews. Ahead of the pilot were the gun butts above the instrument panel, and the compass sat by his right thigh. Like all German aircraft, the throttle was pulled back to accelerate and pushed forward to slow.

© Getty

Lieutenant Rudolf Hess sits in the cockpit of his Fokker D.VII circa October 1918 at Gosselies near Charleroi, Belgium

The D.VIIs of Jasta 72 lined up at Bergnicourt, France, July 1918

Lieutenant Gunther von Buren (centre) of Jasta 18 poses with his D.VII

SERVICE HISTORY

The Fokker D.VII was selected in the German fighter trials of January 1918 by a board that included Germany's highest ace, 'Red Baron' Manfred von Richthofen. The first planes arrived on the Western Front in late April 1918, and while Richthofen was by that time dead the first D.VIIs went to his old unit. Allied pilots soon came to respect the new type – it may have lacked the graceful lines of many other German fighters but it also lacked their structural weaknesses. It was fast, manoeuvrable, easy to fly and deadly even in relatively inexperienced hands. However, the D.VIIs were too little, too late to prevent German defeat.

After the war many Allied nations acquired and operated Fokker D.VIIs, and production continued sporadically until the late 1920s. America, Soviet Russia and many Eastern European and Baltic countries operated the type, while Belgium and Switzerland used them into the 1930s.

Fokker D.VII 'U.10' of Jasta 65, now on display at the National Air and Space Museum, Washington DC

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ASSAULT ON THE REICH

WORDS JAMES HOLLAND

In November 1944 the Allies were preparing to attack the Siegfried Line and invade Germany. Among them were the Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry, who together with American infantry led the offensive through minefields and bunkers

A little after 6am, on Saturday, 18 November 1944. It was still dark and raining as Operation Clipper, the battle to smash wide open the Siegfried Line at Geilenkirchen, began. It was also freezing cold. "The draught on my back wasn't funny," noted Arthur Reddish, the gunner in Major John Semken's A Squadron. The assembly area was about 730 metres south of a railway embankment, near a large farmhouse, which was already wrecked and surrounded by what a couple of months earlier would have been a lovely, lush orchard but was now desolate. Immediately north of the farm, running for around 350-450 metres, was a dense minefield; then came the railway, with enemy troops dug in on the reverse slopes. A little further eastwards, towards the village of Immendorf, were three concrete bunkers immediately south of the railway, with a further three to the north of the Geilenkirchen-Immendorf road. More bunkers stood behind these, and more mines.

Not for the first time, the Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry had been paired with American infantry, although this time those of the 84th 'Railsplitters' Division, only arrived in Europe in October and never before tested in combat. The plan was for flail tanks, with their rotating chains, to clear two lanes through the minefields and for the Sherwood Rangers to follow and clear the bunkers. The infantry would then pour through and together with the British armour, further clear the Siegfried Line defences, or Westwall, as it was also known. Allied artillery was already thundering, sending over a heavy barrage, while searchlights had been brought in to help light the way, a double-edged sword if ever there was one. The conditions were appalling: the cold, the dark, and the rain, which inevitably worked its way into the tanks because the hatches were open. Periscopes were ineffective at the best of times but especially when streaked with rain, which meant Semken, the squadron commander, had his head out of the turret and so did Johnny West, the driver.

Things started to go wrong for Semken's crew right away when the cupola hit a branch as they moved forward. This held the butterfly wing hatches and rotated, so that the hatches could operate as movable shields. Unfortunately, the blow jammed the hatches so they were open forward and back rather than on either side, and which meant Semken could only see ahead by pushing himself up and looking over the open half-hatch. Despite best efforts, nothing could be done to shift the cupola again.

Worse soon followed. A troop of four British flails were to clear A Squadron's path through the minefield with American minesweeping engineers following, but the first flail broke down in the mud before they'd even started. Soon after, a second flail became bogged in the mud. This meant a path that was supposed to be four tanks wide was now two. Then a third flail became stuck and then the fourth, some 50 metres short of the railway. It was still dark and raining, the sky only dimly lit by searchlights and the flashes of exploding shells. Small arms crackled. Semken now had to either reverse

James Holland is an award-winning historian, writer, broadcaster and best-selling author He is also co-founder of the Chalke Valley History Festival, a fellow of the Royal Historical Society, and co-host of weekly podcast We Have Ways of Making You Talk

***Main image:** A Squadron fight their way through the streets of Geilenkirchen*

***Right, top-left:** Major John Semken of A Squadron*

***Right, top-right:** The crew of a tank dubbed Akilla pose for a photo*

***Right, middle:** C Squadron and American troops head out of Prummern*

***Right, bottom-left:** A Sherman Firefly tank*

***Right, bottom-right:** A tank crew from B Squadron pictured at the River Rhine*

or push on regardless, through the uncleared mines. He switched the radio over to the B net to speak to the entire squadron, 19 tanks in all. They had a job to do: to get through the minefield and help the infantry. He was going to push on. If they hit a mine, then the next tank was to take over and so on, until they were across that railway and the minefield.

Everyone in the tank was tense as they inched forward through the mud, waiting for the explosion that would surely come. The engine working hard in that mud. The tank slithering. Grinding forward, a metre at a time. Ten metres gone, then another. Small-arms tracer stabbing through the dark, clattering around the tank.

"SEMKEN NOW HAD TO EITHER REVERSE OR PUSH ON REGARDLESS, THROUGH THE UNCLEARED MINES"

Then a massive staccato explosion that lifted the tank in the air and whammed it back down into the mud. Although he was wearing headphones, Arthur Reddish reckoned it was the loudest explosion he'd ever heard. Semken: was everyone all right? Yes. All answered. A miracle. Incredibly, they had just detonated four mines simultaneously and survived. The Sherman, its tracks and wheels shattered, now lay in a big crater of mud.

That the Sherwood Rangers were there, fighting alongside the Americans of the 84th Division, was because of a shift of strategy made by the Allies the previous month. Operation Market Garden, the attempt in the second half of September to strike across the River Rhine where it was narrow and beyond the northern limits of the Siegfried Line, had failed; and with winter coming, the days shortening and the weather worsening, the Allies' ability to move swiftly with the full weight of their mechanised armies and accompanying overwhelming air power had diminished. On 18 October, General Eisenhower, the Supreme Allied Command, and his two army group commanders, the British Field Marshal Montgomery and American General Omar Bradley, had met to agree the next moves. Eisenhower wanted a 'broad front' approach, generally favoured by American commanders and one that, given the Allies' enormous resources, had a great deal of merit. What's more, American, British, Canadian and French armies were now lined up along nearly 650km of the German border. A broad front strategy played to Allied strengths and ensured the Germans would face attacks along a front they were increasingly ill-equipped to defend.

Supplies were the limiting factor. The Allied way of war was to push forward, relentlessly, and always to have enough of everything to ensure that any major attack was successful. Compared with the Germans, they remained awash with supplies, but it was no good comparing themselves with the enemy – after all, fighting with a paucity of supplies had not worked for them. Without this very long logistical tail – this 'Big War' approach – the Allies would not attempt any major operations and quite

Allied tanks, pictured 9 February 1945

Sherwood Rangers pictured in Geldern, 6 March 1945

A crew from C Squadron during a rare lull in the fighting

Men from the Sherwood Rangers pictured in as they prepare a meal

Allied armour in action during Operation Clipper, 9 February 1945

Sherwood Rangers advance through flat, open ground

rightly too. In the autumn of 1944, this meant clearing the River Scheldt that led from the English Channel to the key port of Antwerp. Until Antwerp was operational, not enough supplies could be fed through to the front.

However, although the Scheldt was finally in Allied hands by 8 November, the port was not immediately ready for use, which meant only limited operations were to be undertaken until it was up and running. One such was to chip away at the German border defences of the Siegfried Line and to try and straighten obvious salients. This was the thinking behind Operation Clipper, a joint Anglo-US assault on Geilenkirchen. The Sherwood Rangers, along with the rest of 8th Armoured Brigade, of which they were part, and the 43rd Wessex Division, were sent south into the US sector of the front because the planned British attack from Nijmegen through the Reichswald had been postponed and because General Bradley was also having severe supply issues. He'd had to siphon off units from his First and Ninth Armies to support General Patton's Third Army drive towards the Saar, further to the south. This had prompted an adjustment in the Allied line.

Geilenkirchen, before the war an unremarkable market town on the German border some 55km south-west of Düsseldorf, had become a key anchor point at that stretch of the Westwall; either side of it were some of the strongest parts of the Siegfried Line defences, with immense minefields, anti-tank ditches and concrete emplacements.

Bradley wanted General Bill Simpson's Ninth Army to push forward to the Rhine at Cologne, yet Simpson recognised that if Geilenkirchen were not taken first, his left flank would be dangerously exposed. On the other hand, if he included the town as an early objective in his drive east, his troops could easily get sucked into taking it at the expense of a swift push to the Rhine.

The loan of the Wessexmen and 8th Armoured Brigade was a means of helping him to achieve both objectives. The Sherwood Rangers were chosen to partner the new 84th Railsplitters, who would be part of the Geilenkirchen attack, because they already had good form of working alongside the 82nd Airborne Division around Nijmegen back in September. For an armoured unit such as the Sherwood Rangers, however, operating with rookie infantry fresh to battle was never easy, because the foot soldiers simply had never operated hand-in-glove with armour before. What's more, the infantry commanders always outranked their corresponding number in the armoured regiment. Lieutenant-Colonel Stanley h, commander of the Sherwood Rangers, and his three squadron commanders, would have to tread very carefully to avoid the actual minefields and the minefield of infantry-armour co-operation.

After Semken's tank had detonated four mines, the rest of A Squadron managed to inch their way past the crater surrounding the wreck. Dawn was by now creeping over the battlefield, although it was one of those winter days that never properly grew light. A day of monochrome, of black, skeletal trees, the only colour coming from explosions and the jets of fire from the accompanying British Crocodile flame-thrower tanks. Together, and now with the

Men of Sherwood Rangers Recce troop, the first British soldiers to fight on German soil, in Sept. 1944

Allied armour photographed c.1944-45

A tank crew pictured among the ruins of Geldern

American infantry alongside, they cleared the four pillboxes beyond the railway embankment. Most of the 183 Volksgrenadier Division defending the Geilenkirchen sector were as new to battle as the 84th Railsplitters, but nothing like so well trained, and in the early morning the weight of Allied fire and determined attacks by US infantry proved too much for most of them. Those not blasted out quickly appeared with hands held aloft. So far, despite the rain, mud and mines, the Allied advance was going better than many had privately expected.

B Squadron had also managed to battle its way through the mines, but not using their planned route. Rather, they'd had to use A Squadron's gap as well. "The going in this gap was appalling," noted Major Peter Selerie, the B Squadron commander. "People were becoming bellied everywhere and I had the misfortune to be compelled as a result to change my mount three times." On they pushed, grinding and slithering through the mud, clearing a short, sharp ridge line and pushing on towards the key village of Prummern, a few kilometres east of Geilenkirchen.

As is nearly always the case in battle, it took time to cover ground. Tanks were inching forward, firing high explosive at any German position they could see and spraying them with machine-gun fire. Their own mortars were hammering away, too, and at the same time the American infantry were moving forward, squads and platoons scurrying across the mud, hitting the deck, waiting for more suppressing fire, then getting up and moving forward again, the air heavy with rain and raining bullets, mortars and shells. It was a slow, dirty business.

Nonetheless, despite the encouraging start, there were reports of German panzers heading their way to reinforce the situation, and sure enough, by the end of the day, fresh enemy troops and armour had reached the edge of Prummern and the area to the north and north-east of Geilenkirchen. By then, the Allied advance had also ground down largely thanks to the mud. Numerous tanks had simply become bogged down and so were inoperable, while getting artillery and anti-tank guns forward and into position was also proving extremely challenging. Peter Selerie sent a troop of four of his tanks to bring up a number of American anti-tank guns, which were, thankfully, in position on the ridge to the south-west of Prummern by nightfall.

Sure enough, that night German panzers and other reinforcements began arriving. Sergeant Henry Douthwaite, and his troop in C Squadron, now up in the line, managed to defend a crossroads at the north-east end of Prummern village, despite repeated assaults by men of the 33 Panzer Regiment. Two panzers were hit and knocked out, while a third detonated on a mine that Douthwaite's men had relaid. Despite Douthwaite's best efforts, however, it was clear as dawn broke that both C Squadron and their American comrades were going to have a job on their hands that second day of the battle.

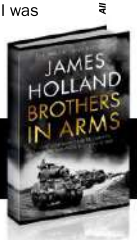
"THAT WAS MY LAST BATTLE. I LOST MY TOUCH AFTER THAT... AFTER THAT, I WAS FINISHED"

So it proved. Later that day, Selerie was severely wounded as his and a number of other B Squadron tanks were caught by panzers as they pressed forward to the west of Prummern. Meanwhile, A Squadron, with Semken back in charge in a new mount, had now been pulled back and then sent into Geilenkirchen alongside the infantry of the 333rd Regiment. The town fell easily but what followed was a slow slog north-eastwards up the Wurm Valley. By evening, the main objective of Operation Clipper had been met: Geilenkirchen was in Allied hands and the infantry advancing up the Wurm Valley had linked up with the Wessex Division on their left flank. Even so, progress was dramatically slowing as casualties mounted – in men and tanks – and German resistance to the advance strengthened. A grim slogging match had developed over ground that was becoming ever more syrupy as the rain continued to fall and vehicles and shells increasingly churned up the earth.

By the end of the 20 November, the third day, the area north of Prummern had been finally cleared but the 15 Panzergrenadier and 10 Panzer Divisions were closing in and the Allied advance had largely ground to a halt. So it continued, tanks and men slipping into the mud in scenes reminiscent of Passchendaele on the Western Front some 27 years earlier. B and C Squadrons had been morphed into one but by the 23rd, the sixth day, amounted to just six tanks, rather than the 38 with which they began the battle.

Six days of this kind of fighting was the upper end of what was sustainable. "Everybody was going through the motions," noted Lieutenant Peter Mellowes, a troop commander in A Squadron, "of living, fighting and waiting for their time to die." That night, both the Railsplitters and the Sherwood Rangers were ordered to go on to the defensive. The six days of battle had cost this fresh division 2,000 battlefield casualties and a further 500 from non-battle losses, mainly trench foot. Christopherson's men, meanwhile, had seen ten tanks had been destroyed, 15 damaged and either recovered or recoverable, and a further 12 lost forever in the mud. The human cost had been considerably worse: 63 in all, including 16 killed in action and a further three who would later die of their wounds. That made 326 casualties since D-Day, which was comfortably more than 100 per cent of the regiment's tank crews at any one time. A further casualty was Semken, who was sent home a few weeks later. "That was my last battle," he said about Geilenkirchen. "I lost my touch after that… After that, I was finished. And I was invalided home." He'd served throughout the North Africa campaign, then since D-Day. He was just 23.

Brothers in Arms by James Holland is on sale now at all good stores



All images courtesy of James Holland

"THE INVASION HAD BEGUN IN EARNEST, WITH GUNSHIPS STREAKING ACROSS ROOFTOPS AND GUNFIRE AND EXPLOSIONS ON THE STREETS"

© Getty

ESCAPING SAIGON

On 30 April 1975, photojournalist Dirck Halstead witnessed the dramatic final withdrawal of American forces as the North Vietnamese conquered the city

WORDS **BEN BIGGS**

Back in March 1975, photographer Dirck Halstead was taking snapshots of the rich and famous, staying in plush hotels and living a "photographer's dream assignment" – but he wasn't happy. The war in Vietnam had passed a pivotal point and now the scales had tipped firmly in favour of the communist North Vietnamese Army and the Viet Cong.

As the enemy marched towards Saigon, the Americans made plans to pull out. By 21 April, nine days before the final evacuation, Halstead found himself back in the country that had nearly killed him several years before. And he had what some from the outside looking in might consider an unusual perspective…

"I've had a love-hate relationship with Vietnam for many, many years and this is not uncommon," he says. "I think if you ask most journalists that worked there they would say the same thing. Covering wars is about the most fun we get to do, because even though they can be terrifying, the emotional highs that come with it are equally extreme. I'm not sure that you would find as many fans of covering wars these days as you did then, because now wars are not fought in fun places generally.

"Vietnam was the exception to that. Vietnam was a fun place to be. The food was absolutely wonderful, it was sophisticated. Cocktail hour sitting on top of the Continental Palace or the roof of the Caravelle [both hotels] was wonderful. So there were a lot of creature comforts in Vietnam that other wars did not have. I think that for me it was a formative experience journalistically, as wars are for many journalists."

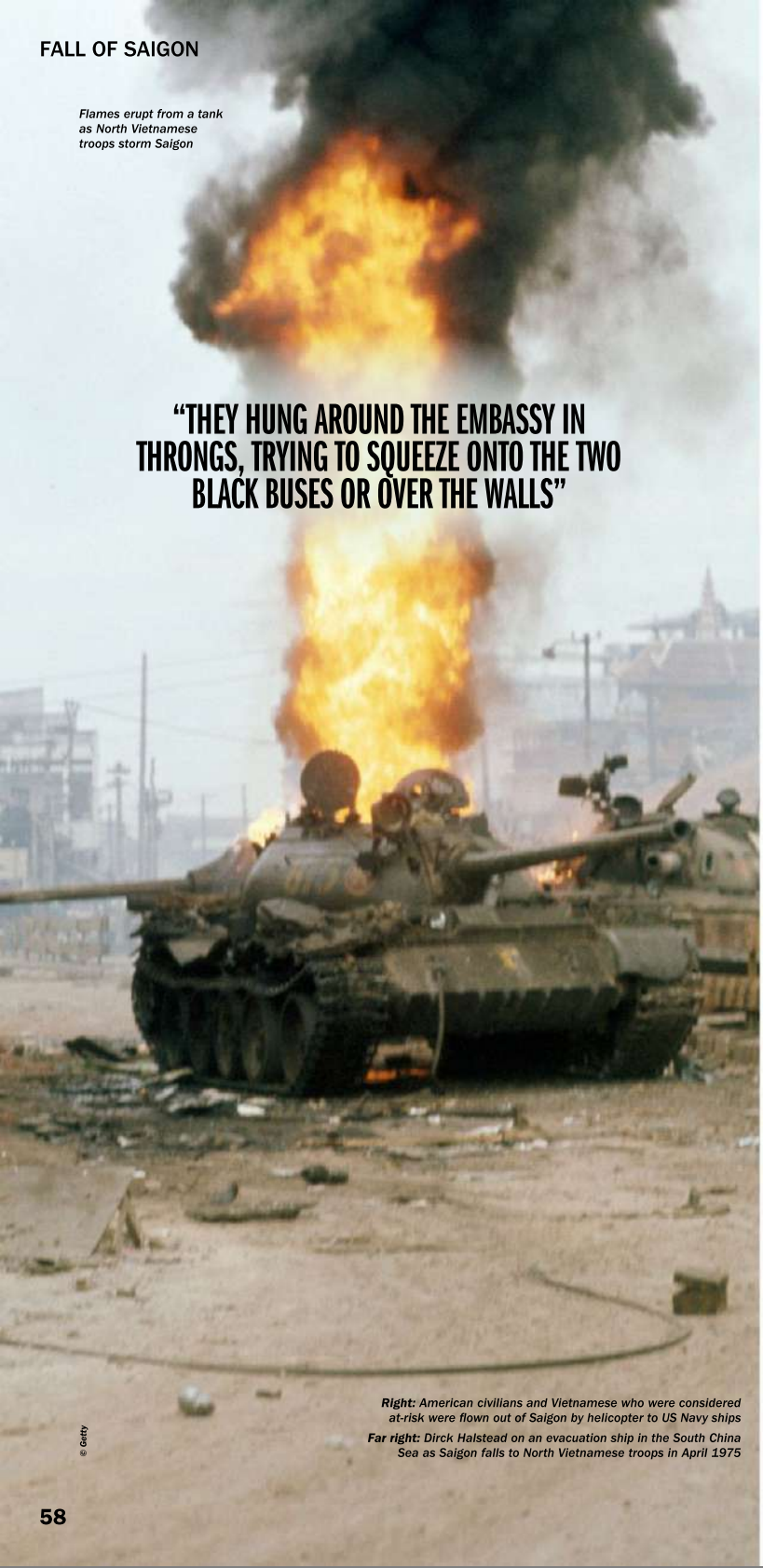
Saigon had been a long way from the front lines for two decades and, with US Ambassador Graham Martin planning to evacuate Americans and refugees under the radar, life went on with relative normality. "As most books will acknowledge, until the last week of the war, Saigon was remarkably unchanged," says Halstead. "The bars were still open, the great restaurants were still [serving]… The war still had not come to Saigon and life went on very much as it had for most of the last 20 years. But all you had to do was look at the map. The tide was inexorable."

Nine days before the final evacuation, Halstead boarded a helicopter to a point on the Saigon-Bien Hoa Highway where he could see some action. A single Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) battalion was holding back the entire North Vietnamese Army at a village called Xuan Loc. "I would say that in the month leading up to the collapse you had plenty of chances for excitement – if you want to put it that way," he explains. "There were opportunities to get onto helicopters and go into places like Xuan Loc. Everybody wanted to do that – in fact, I nearly came to blows with a *Time* magazine correspondent over getting on a helicopter to Xuan Loc."

At the village, Halstead had a close call. Xuan Loc had been torn apart and was eerily quiet, with just a few friendlies cowering in their nearby foxholes. But as their military escort, led by General Le Minh Dao, moved down the road looking for survivors, gunfire split the air around them and the village erupted. Their escort fled in the only Chinook helicopter available, leaving Halstead and a number of other journalists wondering if that was going to be the end of the war for them. Fortunately the chopper returned an hour later to pick them up, just as a North Vietnamese armoured division was bearing down on them. But Halstead was too busy covering the unfolding story to fear for his life: "I had great confidence in the capabilities of the military to get us out of there when the

DIRCK HALSTEAD *Over the last 50 years, award-winning photojournalist Dirck Halstead has worked for United Press International and Time magazine. He has documented several wars, witnessed the attempted assassination of two US presidents, and accompanied Richard Nixon on his tour of China. One of the biggest moments of his career, though, was the fall of Saigon in 1975.*

Left: *A US Marine stops a Vietnamese man from climbing into the US Embassy as hundreds of desperate civilians gather outside*



Flames erupt from a tank as North Vietnamese troops storm Saigon

"THEY HUNG AROUND THE EMBASSY IN THRONGS, TRYING TO SQUEEZE ONTO THE TWO BLACK BUSES OR OVER THE WALLS"

© Getty

time came. All of us were privy to the planning, so we knew that at a certain time we had to assemble at a given point, get picked up by a bus or put on a helicopter. There was no anxiety on that score.

"We were all busy and every day the noose tightened on Saigon. So if you wanted to go see some 'bang-bang', you just had to go a little way up the highway. The great thing was that even during the last week when, literally, the fighting was on the bridges coming into Saigon, we still met for cocktail hour in the Continental Palace terrace. It was very strange."

The fighting in the days leading up to the fall of Saigon was intense, and by 27 April the bulk of the 100,000-strong communist People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) was on the outskirts of the city. As the Americans withdrew, those trapped in Saigon feared a repeat of the 1968 Hue massacre by the PAVN. Planes full of refugees fleeing to America – both legal and illegal – streamed out of Tan Son Nhut Air Base, owners of some of the city's most opulent houses traded in their properties for a pittance, while the cost of an American visa rocketed. On the streets an even more dismal scene was playing out: some American workers preyed upon young Vietnamese women desperate to get out, and the US Embassy simply allowed them to sign affidavits vouching they'd support these women – effectively, in Halstead's words, "subsidising a whole flock of instant pimps". He continues: "Civilians did everything they could to get out of there somehow, calling on any help that they could find – especially among the Americans – to escape. Their situation was desperate, but, of course, we're professional journalists so we don't get desperate – we just get more into the story."

The same day an explosion tore apart the presidential suite in the Majestic Hotel, marking the end of a 40-month period without incident in Saigon. Meanwhile, in the North Vietnamese compound in Tan Son Nhut Air Base, the weekly press conference still went ahead. The representatives from Hanoi and its chief spokesman, Colonel Ba, were answering questions from the gaggle of press gathered

Right: *American civilians and Vietnamese who were considered at-risk were flown out of Saigon by helicopter to US Navy ships*

Far right: *Dirck Halstead on an evacuation ship in the South China Sea as Saigon falls to North Vietnamese troops in April 1975*

there. Anticipation was high and one of the questions repeatedly put to the colonel was: who would be safe if they stayed in the city once it was taken? To which Colonel Ba's ambiguous answer was: "Anyone who earns an honest living will be welcome."

Despite the ominous-sounding words of the North Vietnamese colonel, Halstead remained unperturbed: "The only personal decision that I felt was incumbent on me to make was the basic one: do I stay or do I go? There were strong reasons for both options. In my case, because I was a contract photographer, I did not necessarily have to go along with any decision that *Time* magazine made, though it was strongly recommended I did.

"All the staff people, with the exception of the Associated Press – I think [there had been] an order from their New York offices – had to leave and expedite the evacuation of all Vietnamese nationals working for them."

The next day, the invasion of Saigon began in earnest, with gunships streaking across the rooftops and gunfire and explosions on the streets. Though most of the Western press bureaus had cleared their people out, there still remained a thinning contingent of die-hard Westerners – predominantly journalists and government officials – clinging on until the very last chopper out of there.

Halstead himself was approached by a Vietnamese colleague – his darkroom man – trying to get his family out. He told him to fetch his family and meet him back there, but the coded message to evacuate ("The temperature is 105 and rising") came over the radio as soon as he had gone. Halstead was left with little choice but to rush for the buses to the air base without his workmate.

At the embassy the desperate plight of those unable to escape became most apparent. They hung around the entrance in throngs, trying to squeeze onto the two black buses or climb over the walls into compound as the US Marines pushed them back.

When they couldn't get on the buses, they surged in front of one, forming a line that blocked its path. With a Marine barking in the driver's face, telling him to "Move it!" while pressing a handgun into his neck, he had no choice but to drive the bus straight into the mayhem, inevitably crushing several people before it had cleared the crowd.

Well aware of the final stages of the American withdrawal, the PAVN was focusing its attention on securing the city and clearing the last of the South Vietnamese resistance. Nevertheless, it wasn't about to let the Americans go without a little encouragement. Tan Son Nhut Air Base had already come under attack and, while the helicopters landed to pick up the remaining press workers and civilians, the Marines guarding the compound came under a hail of mortar fire.

Halstead was finally taken by helicopter to the safety of a nearby US ship. "The evacuation for me involved three different ships," he says. "The first helicopter that took me out landed me on the USS Blue Ridge, which was the command ship. That's where a lot of the high-profile people like Ambassador Graham Martin were – they all landed on the Blue Ridge. But the problem with that ship was that it had no fixed-wing capability, so now my whole race was to get this film that was sitting in the middle of the South China Sea to the Philippines and then to New York. That was a real challenge and we had to petition the skipper of the Blue Ridge to get us off there so we could get to a carrier.

"I'd been forbidden to leave the Blue Ridge, so when a helicopter came in from the [carrier] USS Coral Sea to deposit some officers, I made a break for it. They were shouting, 'Stop that man!' I jumped on the helicopter and yelled at the pilot to get me off there.

"[Saigon] is right up there [as a defining moment in my career]. The Nixon trip to China was the biggest story because there was so much competition to get on it and I was fortunate enough to be selected as one of six photographers to go on that trip. Everything was brand new and so historic… But looking back, I feel I was very blessed to have been able to go down this path and be there as history was being made in Vietnam."

Source: WHI / PD / Gov

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THE DAY SAIGON WAS INVADED

3.45AM — **FREQUENT WIND ENDS**
The evacuation of US civilians and some refugees – Operation Frequent Wind – begun the day before on 29 April, is halted

3.50AM — **THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR GRAHAM MARTIN IS ORDERED TO EVACUATE**

4.00AM — **PAVN 324TH DIVISION ENTERS SAIGON**

4.30AM — **NO MORE VIETNAMESE EVACUEES ALLOWED**

5.00AM — **MARTIN ESCAPES**
Ambassador Martin leaves the US embassy for a US Navy ship in the South China Sea

6.00AM — **PAVN MOVES INTO SAIGON EN MASSE**

7.00AM — **FINAL CIVILIANS AND OFFICIALS LEAVE VIA TAN SON NHUT AIR BASE**

7.53AM — **MAJORITY OF EMBASSY MARINES EVACUATE VIA HELICOPTER**

10.24AM — **SOUTH SURRENDERS**
President Minh announces South Vietnam's surrender over the radio, calling for an end to "unnecessary bloodshed"

11.30AM — **AMBASSADOR MARTIN LANDS SAFELY ON THE USS BLUE RIDGE**

12.00PM — **INDEPENDENCE PALACE FALLS AS TANKS CRASH THROUGH THE GATES**

12.15PM — **NEW FLAG**
North Vietnam raises its colours – the flag of the Viet Cong – over the palace

1.30PM — **FINAL FIVE MARINES ARE EVACUATED FROM THE CITY**

4.00PM — **ALL AMERICAN SHIPS LEAVE FOR HOME**

Images: WHI / PD / Gov

ALEXANDER S WEBB

Webb was appointed to command of a brigade in the Union II Corps six days before the Battle of Gettysburg began

© Alamy

Heroes of the Medal of Honor

ALEXANDER S WEBB

Appointed to brigade command less than a week before the Battle of Gettysburg, this officer successfully directed the defence of the most important sector on Cemetery Ridge during Pickett's Charge

WORDS: WILLIAM E WELSH

In the early afternoon on the third day of the Battle of Gettysburg, 150 Confederate guns opened fire on the Union forces on Cemetery Ridge to soften them up for an assault by three infantry divisions. The ground shook as shells not only ploughed the earth but also burst in the air above the Union infantry lying prone near a grove of trees in the centre of the Union II Corps position.

Brigadier General Alexander S Webb, who commanded the Philadelphia Brigade of the Union II Corps of the Army of the Potomac, remained standing throughout the ordeal, leaning on his sword and puffing on a cigar. He had been given command of the brigade less than a week earlier, and if any man in the ranks had reason to doubt his courage, his conduct while enemy shells shrieked through the sky dispelled those thoughts immediately. "He stood like a statue watching the movement of the enemy," said one soldier.

Webb, who graduated from the US Military Academy at West Point in 1855, served as a staff officer in the first two years of the war. During the Battle of Chancellorsville in May 1863, he served as assistant inspector general on the staff of Major General George Meade's V Corps. Webb not only scouted enemy positions, but also helped lead detachments into battle. Meade cited Webb's "intelligence and zeal" in his official report.

When Brigadier General John Gibbon, commanding the Second Division of the III Corps, needed a new brigadier for his Second Brigade during the march from Northern Virginia to Gettysburg, he selected Webb to replace Brigadier General Joshua Owen, who had been arrested for an alleged violation of orders.

Webb took command of a 1,200-man brigade whose four regiments were mostly Irish immigrants from the Philadelphia area. Owen had been overly lenient with his brigade, and Webb was determined to improve its discipline and fighting spirit. He warned his officers that he would not tolerate straggling on the forced march to Gettysburg. He instructed them to arrest any stragglers and bring them to him. "[I will] shoot them like dogs," he said.

> "WEBB COMMANDED HIS BRIGADE AT THE LOCATION AT GETTYSBURG ON WHICH CENTRED 'THE FORTUNES OF THE FIELD', AND FOR HOLDING IT HE MUST RECEIVE THE CREDIT DUE HIM"
>
> Major General Winfield Hancock

Having arrived after the disastrous first day in which the Confederates had routed the Union XI Corps, the Philadelphia brigade filed into position on the morning of 2 July on the low rise east of the Emmitsburg Road known as Cemetery Ridge.

Webb's brigade helped to successfully repulse a minor attack on Cemetery Ridge late on the afternoon of the second day of the battle, and Webb received warm praise afterwards from his superior officers for his skillful handling of his men.

The Philadelphia Brigade was understrength on the third day of the battle because Webb had been obliged to loan two regiments on the night of 2-3 July to other corps. Eight companies of the 106th Pennsylvania were still with the I Corps on Cemetery Hill at the time of the Confederate attack on the third day of the battle. As a result Webb had only 940 men with which to defend his sector on the last day of the battle.

The Pennsylvania Brigade held a position that stretched from the so-called Copse of Trees on Cemetery Ridge to a jog in the low stone wall that became known afterwards as The Angle. This was where a section of the north-south wall

turned east before turning north again on its way to Cemetery Hill. The Angle was 90 metres deep.

Webb's brigade was the furthest right of Gibbon's three divisions on Cemetery Ridge. After the Confederate bombardment, Webb strengthened his front rank. It consisted of the 69th Pennsylvania in front of the Copse of Trees on the left and eight companies of the 71st Pennsylvania deployed on the right. His second rank, which was deployed 70 metres further back, consisted of two companies each from the 71st and 106th regiments on the left, and the 72nd Pennsylvania on the right.

The three divisions participating in Pickett's Charge stepped off to the attack at 2pm, and the 15,000 Confederates had to cover just over 1km of open ground to reach Cemetery Ridge. Webb wanted additional artillery support for his infantry, so he sent his aides to nearby batteries to request their help. Captain Andrew Cowan, whose New York battery was limbered to the south, saw Webb waving frantically for help, and he ordered his guns to unlimber on Webb's left flank. Fortunately for Gibbon's division, Union artillery chief Brigadier General Henry J Hunt sent ten more guns to support it.

Pickett's three brigades of Virginians targeted the section of the Union line held by Gibbon's division. Two of Pickett's brigades advanced in the front rank, and the other brigade followed in support. While the Confederates were approaching the stone wall, Webb was helping Cowan place his guns. When the Confederates crossed the Emmitsburg Road, Webb rushed back to his regiments to find that the soldiers of the 71st were retreating from the stone wall.

> **"[WEBB IS ONE OF THE] MOST CONSCIENTIOUS, HARD-WORKING AND FEARLESS YOUNG OFFICERS WE HAVE"**
>
> **Colonel Charles Wainwright, Chief of Artillery Union I Corps**

The Confederates had stopped their advance briefly to pour a heavy fire into Webb's front rank before their front line surged towards the wall. The 71st Pennsylvania, which was led by a second-rate colonel, withdrew from its position after firing just two volleys. When these men quit their position, it opened up a 45-metre gap between the 69th Pennsylvania and another brigade deployed to the right of Webb's brigade.

The 71st fell back "in fear-stricken confusion", said Lieutenant Frank Haskell, one of Gibbon's aides. The majority of these soldiers did not stop until they reached the safety of the rear. Webb said after the battle that he was deeply ashamed of the cowardice exhibited by the officers and soldiers of the 71st Pennsylvania. "When my men fell back, I almost wished to get killed," he said in a letter to his wife.

The 69th Pennsylvania held its ground in the face of overwhelming odds, but Webb had to do something to plug the gap to the right of it. He shouted and waved his sword at the men of the 72nd Pennsylvania in an effort to get them to advance, but they only moved forward a few metres. In the meantime, the attacking Virginians took advantage of the breach in the Union line to scramble over the wall.

Next, Webb rushed over to the colour sergeant of the 72nd and tried to take the colours from him in order to lead the men forward, but the sergeant would not relinquish them. To their credit, though, the soldiers of the 72nd Pennsylvania did fire into the disorganised ranks of the Confederates inside the wall.

Webb rushed over to the 69th Pennsylvania to make sure that regiment continued to hold

Confederate Major General George Pickett's division engages Webb's brigade atop Cemetery Ridge on 3 July, 1863

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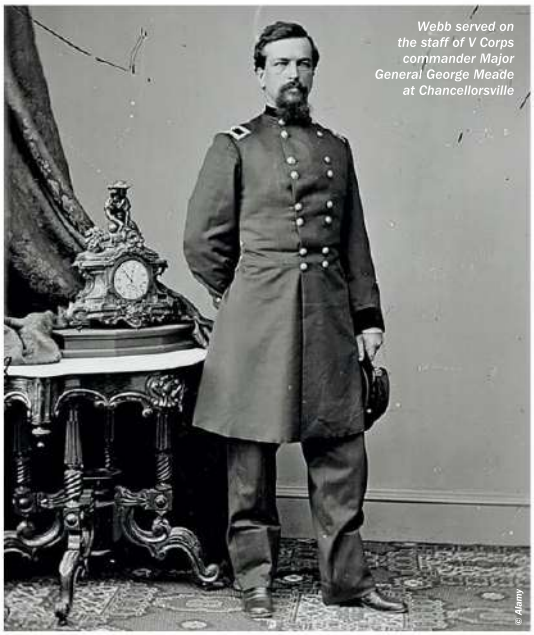
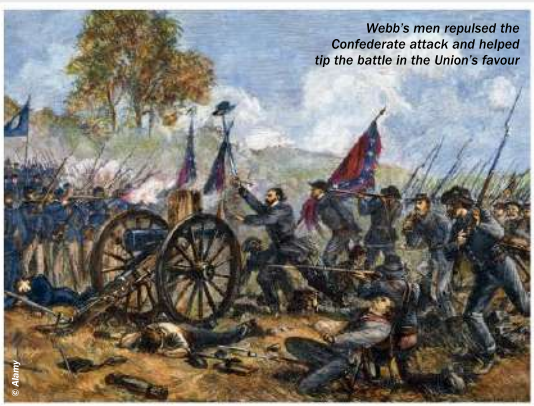


Webb served on the staff of V Corps commander Major General George Meade at Chancellorsville



Webb's men repulsed the Confederate attack and helped tip the battle in the Union's favour

A bronze statue of Webb graces the location at Gettysburg National Military Park where his brigade fought

its ground. As he strode to the regiment's position, a Confederate bullet clipped the inside of his thigh, but it did not stop him. Several regiments to the south rushed to assist the 69th, and Webb helped direct the defence of the ground in front of the Copse of Trees.

By that time, Brigadier General Lewis Armistead's Virginians, who composed the trailing regiment of Pickett's division, had reached the wall. Armistead led them into The Angle, where they ran headlong into the 72nd Pennsylvania and two other Union regiments that had rushed to reinforce Webb's men.

Colonel Norman Hall, who commanded the Third Brigade in Gibbon's division and whose troops were deployed to the left of the 69th Pennsylvania, noted that Webb's men were being "hotly pressed" by Pickett's Division. When Haskell asked Hall if he could send reinforcements to assist Webb, he said he would do so immediately. Colonel Arthur Devereux, commanding the 19th Massachusetts of Hall's Brigade, also observed Webb's predicament. "I saw that Webb could not sustain the shock with his front line," recalled Devereux.

Devereux's regiment and Colonel James Mallon's 42nd New York, both from Hall's brigade, were the first to arrive to bolster Webb's deteriorating line. More troops from further south on Cemetery Ridge also rushed at the double-quick to Webb's sector. Webb's men, with the aid of the fresh regiments, took prisoner a large number of Confederates inside the wall. The threat to the Union centre soon passed, and the survivors of the failed Confederate attack withdrew west to Seminary Ridge.

The day after the battle, Webb told his friend Charles Wainwright, who commanded the I Corps' Artillery Brigade, just how close his brigade had come to being overrun. "He told me that when the enemy reached the wall all his lines began to shake," said Wainwright, "and for the moment he thought they were gone."

Webb was wounded in May 1864 at Spotsylvania Court House while commanding the brigade. Returning to service in January 1865, he became chief of staff to Meade, who was still in command of the Army of the Potomac, until the end of the war. He received the Medal of Honor 28 years after the battle in recognition of his gallantry in leading the brigade in repulse of the enemy on 3 July, 1863.

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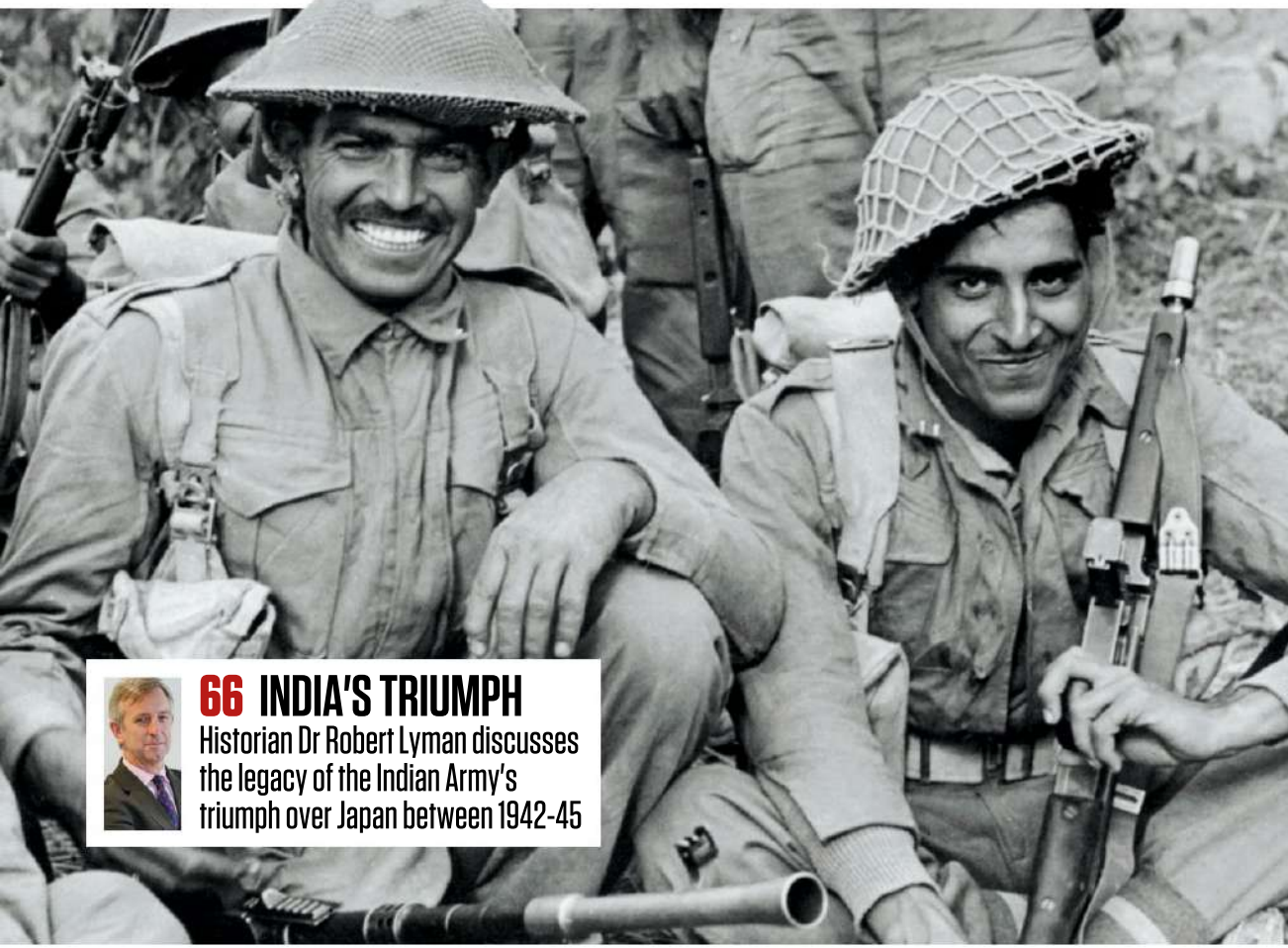

66 INDIA'S TRIUMPH

Historian Dr Robert Lyman discusses the legacy of the Indian Army's triumph over Japan between 1942-45

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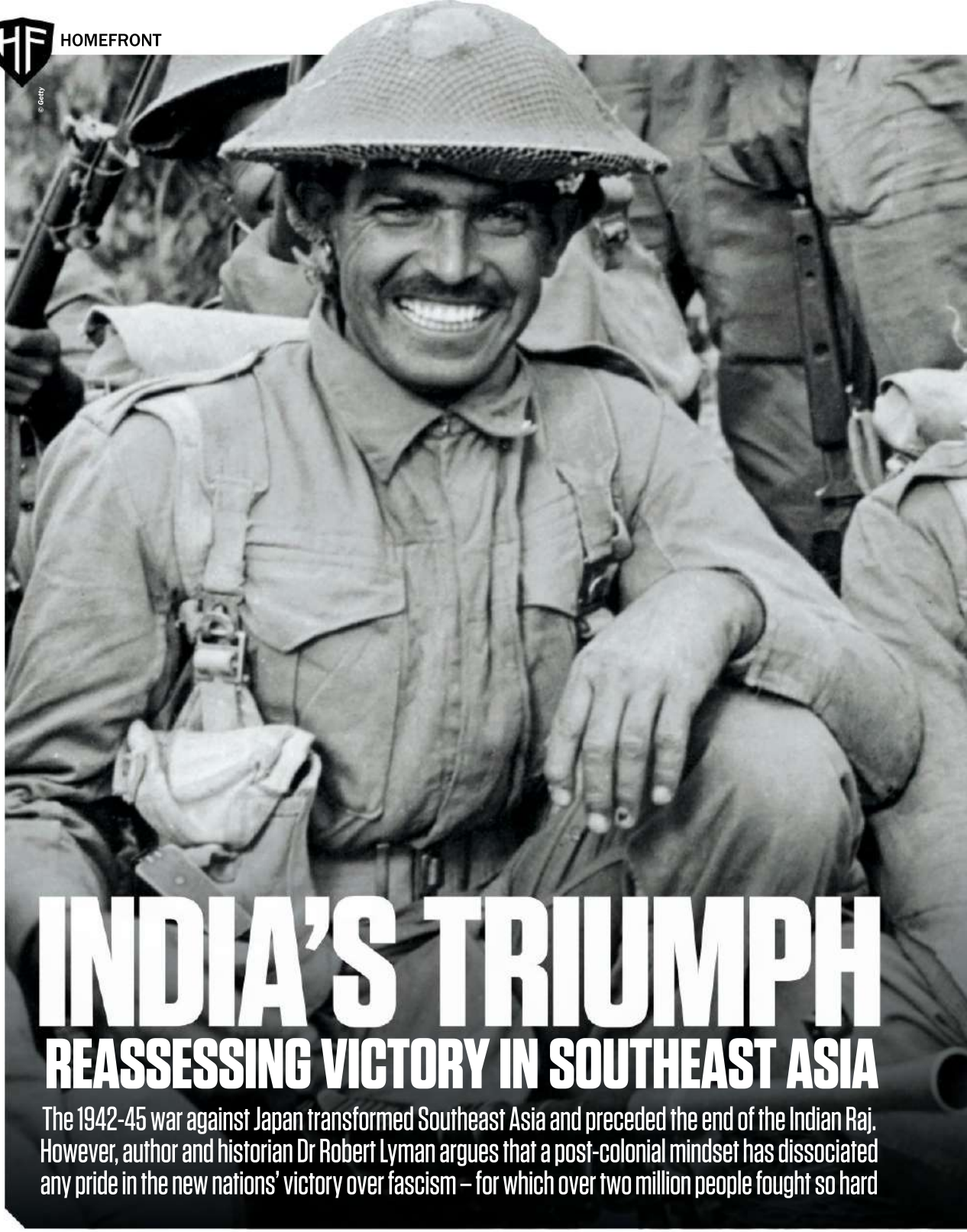
Artefact of War: Napoleonic banner



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INDIA'S TRIUMPH

REASSESSING VICTORY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

The 1942-45 war against Japan transformed Southeast Asia and preceded the end of the Indian Raj. However, author and historian Dr Robert Lyman argues that a post-colonial mindset has dissociated any pride in the new nations' victory over fascism – for which over two million people fought so hard

An Indian infantry section of the 2nd Battalion, 7th Rajput Regiment about to go on patrol on the Arakan front, Burma, circa 1944

Dr Robert Lyman is a retired British Army officer, historian, best-selling author and fellow of the Royal Historical Society. He has also contributed to television documentaries, and was the military consultant to the BBC for the Victory over Japan memorial celebrations in the UK in 2015 and again for the 70th anniversary in 2020.

What do you think of when someone mentions the war in Burma? Is it that 'wild man of the jungle' Orde Wingate? Is it the Burma Star Association? The Chindits? Bill Slim? Jungle? Monsoon? Vinegar Joe Stilwell? Perhaps you might have heard of Kohima, or Imphal, and the haunting lines of the 2nd Division epitaph on Garrison Hill: "When You Go Home, Tell Them of Us and Say, For your Tomorrow, We Gave Our Today."

I wonder whether you've ever considered the strategic role of China, or of the role of the Indian Army in the great battles that made up the war in the Far East between December 1941 and August 1945. I have been studying this subject in detail now for 30 years (I first designed and taught a course on the campaign in 1991) and every time I come back to it I discover something new. Lots more work needs to be done, for instance, on the Chinese war against Japan and the role it played in the Far Eastern theatre as a whole.

When I embarked on my new book *A War of Empires* a few years ago, I was determined to look at the period through a fresh pair of eyes. I was genuinely surprised at what I found. One of the most profound discoveries relates to the nature and role of the Indian Army in securing victory in 1945.

The old empire

It seems extraordinary that, given what we are told about the fragile state of British colonialism in India, and the seething rage of nationalist sentiment across the country, that the Japanese invasion of Southeast Asia in 1941 didn't lead to the collapse of the Raj. After all, some 60,000 Indian POWs did join the Japanese-led Indian National Army in Singapore in 1942 (these numbers were eventually whittled down to 15,000 men in 1944).

Japan believed that the loss of their Asian colonies would send the Europeans scurrying back to Europe with their tails between their legs. Instead, the attempt by Japan to expand its own empire by means of war in 1942 seemed to do the opposite, at least temporarily, as young Indians flocked in large numbers to the service of the Raj, even at a time of growing nationalist clamour at home.

Between 1939 and 1945 India's armed forces recruited 2,581,726 (of whom 2,065,554 were serving at the point the war ended). The Indian Air Force, which had begun the war with 285 officers and men, was now the Royal Indian Air Force, with nine squadrons of aircraft and 29,201 officers and men. It appears that rather than destroying it, the crisis of 1942 strengthened the empire temporarily at its point of greatest peril, and allowed it to strike back decisively in 1944 and 1945. Thereafter, Britain relinquished its control of India not because it had been defeated, but precisely because it had been victorious.

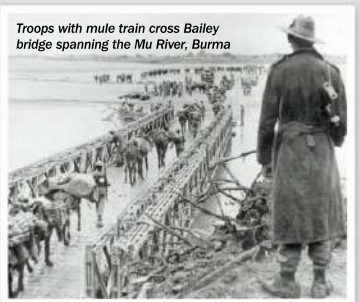
In the decades since, a strange consensus has seemed to settle on this period in the West and in India, both of which treats the history of India during the war as an aberration, because of India's status as a colony of the British Empire. The assumption by many over the decades since independence is that what happened before 1947 – including the Second World War – happened to another, far distant, country. This is because, so it is argued, pre-1947 India was undivided (and for Indian nationalists, tainted by an Islam that has since been exported to Pakistan and Bangladesh), and second that it was part of the Raj and thus tainted by Britain. It is politically unbecoming to equate a sense of Indian-hood with what Marxist historians in the West and nationalists in India tells us was India's slave status under colonialism.

This viewpoint is hardly logical. In fact, it gives us particular problems when we look at the Second World War and India's contribution to the vast human experience that reset the structure of the modern world. The problem is that the post-colonial interpretation makes slaves of Indians. It argues that they had no personal control of their destiny because the government was in the hands of others. When the British declared war, India became an unwilling participant.

This argument, simply stated, is that the top-down forces of colonial government, together with its systems, structures, cultures and attitudes, were deeply and inherently exploitative – so much so that it cannot be argued that colonial intentions were anything other than unfair and abusive. In this view, Indian men fought and strived against their will, even though they weren't fully aware of it, as cultural coercion blinded them to the reality that they were fighting a British war against Britain's enemies.

The absurdity of this argument suggests, to give but one example, that Claude Auchinleck's efforts to raise the pay of Indian commissioned officers to the levels of their British colleagues was for the purpose of buying their loyalty rather than of giving them equality. Equally, it

Troops of the 14th Army in action south from Meiktila, Central Burma



Troops with mule train cross Bailey bridge spanning the Mu River, Burma

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A well-camouflaged machine gun position in the Irrawaddy River area, February 1945

Three soldiers pictured at a Gurkha outpost near Pangan

Allied troops moving through Pegu city

Tanks are unloaded from naval ship in Burma

Troops of the 14th Army advance on Pagan, Burma, prior to forcing a bridgehead across the Irrawaddy River, March 1945

is seriously suggested in some quarters that the offer of money likewise persuaded millions of otherwise impoverished Indians to sign up for war work during the industrial expansion of India. Illiterate peasants knew no better than to take the financial bribes offered in exchange for their labour. It is argued that others were forced by convention and the belief that family and personal honour depended on a military career. Millions of men thus became mercenaries of the British, subject to intense and relentless propaganda which bound their minds and wills in an unprecedented and highly successful, coercive, manipulation.

I suggest that we recognise these assertions to be exaggerations and political point-scoring, to prove that the Raj was bad and that the Indians who willingly stood up against fascism and totalitarianism in the Second World War weren't doing it for India, but because they were forced against their conscious will to do so. But I can find no evidence that 2.5 million men joined the Indian Army between 1939-45 as the result of, as one author puts it, a "propaganda offensive" by the British government which "secured the partial allegiance or at least acquiescence of part of the population".

The argument does not explain why the men thus recruited were prepared to die for this compulsion, and why Indian soldiers were to win 22 of the 34 Victoria and George Crosses awarded, for example, during the Burma Campaign. It is rational to conclude that, instead, most Indians who joined the armed forces in such extraordinary numbers did so because they had weighed up the options and assessed the nature of the sacrifice they were willing to make for the sake of the government of India, regardless of its political colour.

In this sense, their decision was made on the basis of a conception of India much larger than the framework of politics as it existed within Indian polity at the time. The threat to their conception of what India was and could be therefore far outweighed the rights and wrongs of colonialism, if the issue or argument ever surfaced at all for the majority of young men making the choice to join up.

The truth is that reality trumped ideology in the face of the imminent and existential danger to the Indian state by the Japanese. Most Indians accepted that the Raj was, rightly or wrongly, or for the time being, the legally constituted Government of India. Like all governments everywhere, it had supporters and opponents. Few who opposed the government on nationalistic or self-governance grounds questioned its legitimacy, as that would have invalidated their own claim to be its successor in due course. Likewise, the Indian Army was India's army, not Britain's.

The new army

The period between defeat in 1942 and victory in 1944 and 1945 saw the transformation of the Indian Army. It had always been a unique institution, not really British (although overwhelmingly officered by Britons) and not truly Indian either, reflective of its origins as one of three mercenary armies (Bengal, Madras and Bombay) in the pay of the East India Company. It formed almost a sub-state within the Raj, with sworn loyalty to the Queen-

Empress and her successors – trained and deployed to protect India's borders.

The army had traditionally recruited from races the British had considered the most martial – Sikhs, Rajput, Jats from the north, north-west and western regions – whose sturdy resilience was melded with battlefield toughness and a fearsome fighting reputation allied to an unquestioning loyalty to their salt. It was these men – Dogras, Gurkhas, Garhwalis, Sikhs, Rajputs, Jats, Kumaons and Pathans among them – who had helped put down the Mutiny in 1857.

Other races were recruited into the army, but in supporting roles. Few were to recognise this at the time, but the order to expand the Indian Army to meet the requirements of the new war in 1939 was a watershed moment for India as a nation. For the first time its army would reflect the primary imperative of government – the protection and security of its subjects. In 1939 it might have been true that the Indian Army fought because it was a supremely professional and disciplined army, and in the manner of all good armies, it went where it was sent, did what it was told and did it well.

The extraordinary story of the period 1942-45 was that of India transforming itself to take responsibility for its own defence. It did so spectacularly and established itself unequivocally as the guardian of its future. This transformation, built on the basis of thorough training for war, created a new, powerful national army able to serve a new nation on the verge of independence. This new army was distinct from the old, pre-1939 Indian Army, which had existed merely to serve British – rather than Indian – interests.

By 1945 it had become a truly national army, serving an emerging nation increasingly conscious of and confident in its own destiny, and fighting for its own defence and prerogatives, not for those of a rapidly declining and soon-to-be history British Empire. Nearly half of the 8,578 officers in Allied Land Forces South East Asia were now Indian, in a dramatic change since 1939. It was the recruitment of many thousands of young, educated, politically well-informed young Indians as officers in the army that enabled the rapid expansion of the Indian Army to take place. The Burma campaign, the front line of Britain's war with Japan, thus saw the transformation of an army, from an imperial creation to one of the foundation stones of a modern, democratic state.

The Burma campaign

The war in Burma has been dismissed by some commentators as a strategic sideshow, in the sense that winning or losing the campaign in Burma was not decisive in ending the war. I disagree. The war in the Far East contributed significantly to the defeat of Japan. First, Burma unexpectedly became, in 1942, the locus for the defence of India. The campaign retained China in the fight and allowed Allied (and American) strategic imperatives regarding China to be fulfilled, as well as allowing India's vast potential of human and material resources to be used for the Allied war effort.

Burma was the one place where the Allies could provide support to the Chinese government, and for that reason alone it was essential that the country was recovered from Japanese control after it was lost in 1942. Until that could be achieved, India became the launchpad for aerial operations over the airlift route between the upper reaches of Assam and Yunnan province in China – the Hump. Between 1942 and 1945 650,000 tons of supplies were airlifted to China, the equivalent of 260,000 separate C47 sorties, or nearly 240 aircraft flying every single day for three years. By 1945 the airlift comprised 640 aircraft and 34,000 military personnel, the largest such endeavour in human history.

"IT WAS A SUPREMELY PROFESSIONAL AND DISCIPLINED ARMY, AND IN THE MANNER OF ALL GOOD ARMIES, IT WENT WHERE IT WAS SENT, DID WHAT IT WAS TOLD AND DID IT WELL"

It was in Burma where British and American offensive intentions could be demonstrated to a sceptical China, which was holding down a very substantial part of the entire Imperial Japanese Army and wanted a tangible commitment of Allied effort in Burma in exchange for its continuing sacrifice. By 1944 Burma had, in Japanese planning, taken on the role of the defensive left flank for the rich rice, rubber and oil resources of Malaya, Indochina and the Dutch East Indies.

If Burma were lost, the entirety of the Japanese left flank would be opened up, ripe for Allied counterstrike into the heart of Japan's ill-named Co Prosperity Sphere. Between 1942 and 1945 Burma was home to the Japanese Burma Area Army – at least 308,582 strong at its height – which was a demonstrable threat to India, as indeed it proved in the 'March on Delhi', Operations Ha-Go and U-Go in 1944.

A predominantly Indian Army stopped and turned back the Japanese invasion of India in 1944 and recovered Burma from the hands of the invader in 1945. It is true that Tokyo did not seriously plan a full-scale invasion of India, designed to topple the Raj. It was, nevertheless a glint in Mutaguchi's eye, and if Operation U-Go had been more than competently managed, a very serious threat existed to the security and stability of the whole of Bengal, Assam and Manipur.

India was a very significant element in the Allied war effort as a whole. It was the empire's greatest reservoir of military manpower, providing 2.5 million men across several theatres of the war effort. It also became a significant supplier of war materiel, in the process of which the Indian economy was fundamentally changed, ending the war as a large creditor of the British Exchequer. A successful Japanese invasion, even if only into the Brahmaputra Valley, would have had far reaching consequences both militarily and politically.

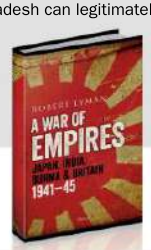
The Burma campaign contributed significantly to the destruction of Japanese military power across the whole of Asia and the Pacific. It was in Assam and Burma in 1944 and 1945 that the Japanese suffered their greatest losses in the Second World War, together with a succession of humiliating defeats, losing by their own admission a total of 185,149 killed, nearly 13-times British/Indian losses, in the period between March 1944 and May 1945.

This destruction allowed the Allies to manage the narrative of defeat among the Japanese. Demonstrating that their armies had been militarily defeated in the field removed any arguments that Japan had fallen merely as a result of the A-bomb. Defeating the Imperial Japanese Army so decisively was important for removing any residual sense in Japanese minds of the power of militarism.

The Burma campaign provided the opportunity for the Indian Army to play a decisive role in defeating the forces of militarism, building a strong historic narrative in the corporate memory of the new nations that would emerge from Partition in 1947. That India and Pakistan seem to have forgotten these 1944 and 1945 victories does not invalidate or deny this historical reality. It is one that, perhaps, a new generation, less encumbered by the commitment of their parents and grandparents to the founding myths of the post-colonial enterprise, can embrace.

In terms of statistics, the Burma campaign was the longest campaign fought by Allied armies in the Second World War, and in 1945 provided the largest army group ever assembled by the British Commonwealth and its friends. In April 1945 the number of Allied service personnel in South East Asia Command (ie, excluding India Command) totalled 1,304,126, including nearly 300,000 Americans. Of this number the British Commonwealth provided 954,985, of whom 606,149 were in 'Operational Land Forces' – soldiers in the fighting brigades, divisions and corps (4, 15, 33 and the Northern Combat Area Command). Of this total (606,149) 87 per cent were Indian, three per cent African and 10 per cent British.

India, therefore, has every right to recover the history of the pre-1947 period, for it was then that the foundations of modern India were established. The Japanese in Assam and Manipur in 1944 and in Burma in 1945 were defeated by an army that was overwhelmingly Indian. Victory in Asia could never have taken place without Indians coming forward in large numbers, and of their own volition, to serve their country. It is in this that India, Pakistan and Bangladesh can legitimately take great pride. Britain, the imperial power at the time and for two short years after the end of the war, can do so too.



Dr Robert Lyman's book *A War of Empires* is on sale 11 November. Visit ospreypublishing.com

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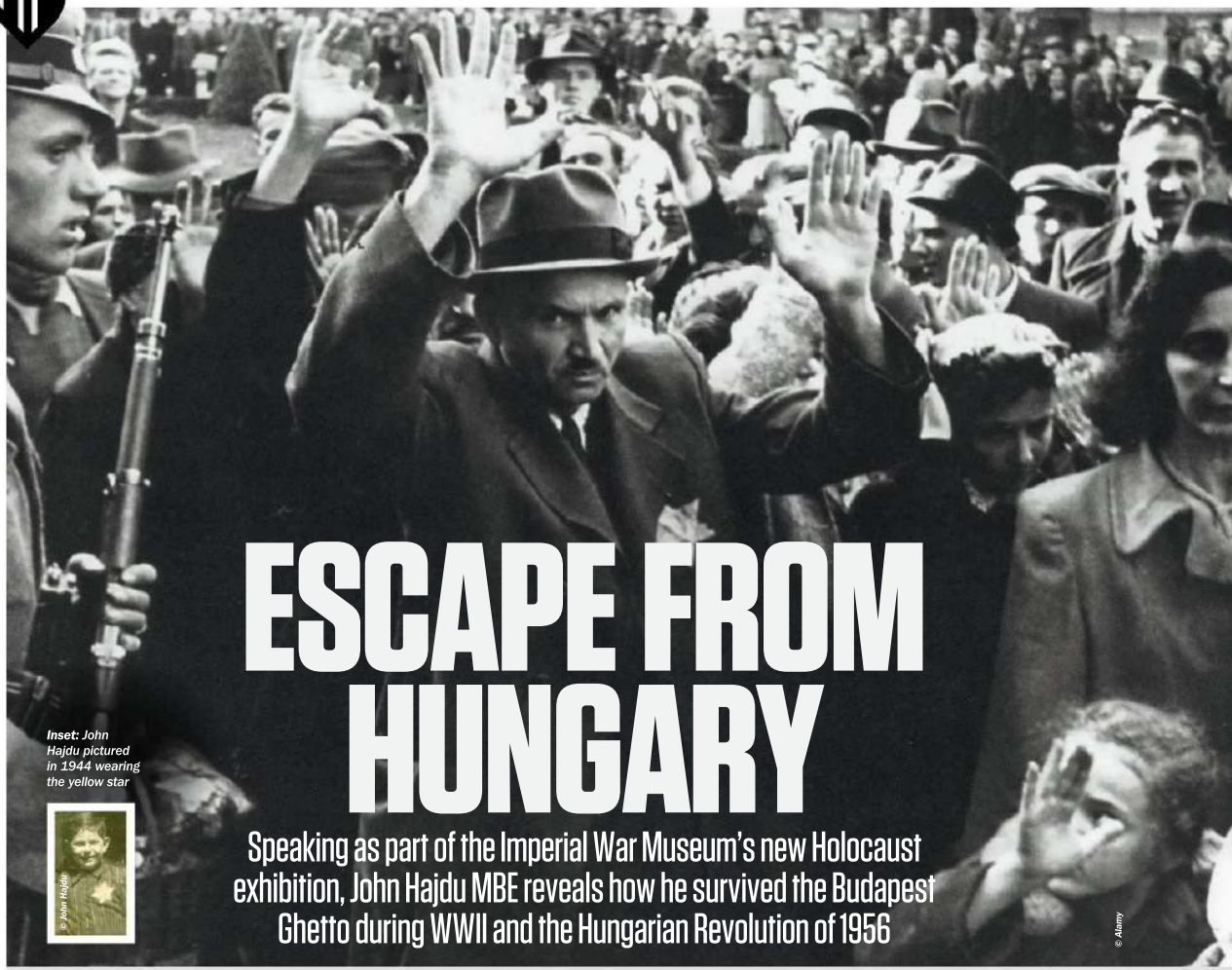


ESCAPE FROM HUNGARY

Speaking as part of the Imperial War Museum's new Holocaust exhibition, John Hajdu MBE reveals how he survived the Budapest Ghetto during WWII and the Hungarian Revolution of 1956

© John Hajdu

***Inset:** John Hajdu pictured in 1944 wearing the yellow star*

© Alamy

A new photography exhibition at IWM London has brought together 50 contemporary portraits of Holocaust survivors and their families. The aim of Generations: Portraits of Holocaust Survivors is to shine a light on their full lives and our collective responsibility to ensure their stories live on. One of the portraits is of John Hajdu, a Hungarian from Budapest who experienced the Nazi and Soviet occupations of Hungary. Born in 1937 to a middle-class Jewish family, Hajdu survived the Budapest Ghetto before he escaped to Britain in 1956 following the Hungarian Revolution. He recalls being separated from his parents, the appalling conditions of the ghetto and how he finally escaped from Hungary.

HOLOCAUST IN BUDAPEST

What are your earliest memories of WWII?
They are vague but I remember my father being taken to a labour camp in 1943. Labourers were made to undertake very heavy labour and some died. They didn't have enough food so my mother and I were 'allowed' to visit my father. We could only drop off the food, say goodbye and leave.

What happened when the Nazis occupied Hungary in March 1944?
It was an incredible shift and they ordered all Jews to wear a yellow star. This resulted in constant abuse from a group of anti-Semitic youth who were members of the far-right Arrow Cross party. They were more Nazi than the German Nazis – Hungarians were much worse than the Germans in many ways. I was dimly aware that something wasn't right. I was seven years old but I kind of got used to wearing the yellow star even knowing that it was discriminatory.

How were you separated from your mother?
It was terrifying. Adolf Eichmann stationed himself in Budapest and ordered the confiscation of Jewish properties. A mass roundup started in October 1944 with the Arrow Cross searching each flat and herding Jewish women and children into the courtyard of each block. They gave them just a few minutes to say goodbye.

***Above:** A German soldier stands guard as Jews are rounded up in Budapest, late 1944. Approximately 568,000 Hungarian Jews were killed during the Holocaust*

This happened to us on 13 October 1944. My mother was taken away but my maternal aunt grabbed me and rushed across the corridor to a non-Jewish friend's flat. She begged him to hide us in a cupboard. If we had been discovered, we would have all been shot. Luckily, he hid us and that saved our lives. We had to move into the ghetto after that.

What were conditions like in the ghetto?
The ghetto was a huge, restricted, walled area and around 20 of us lived in each flat in unbelievable conditions. We survived on very little food – I think we had some horse meat, dripping and bread. Water was brought up in buckets and there was no medicine. If you became ill it was unfortunate and if you died it was bad luck. There were no cleaning materials, no rubbish was collected and there were dead bodies all over the pavement.

The Russians were also advancing into Hungary and started bombing Budapest. They had no idea about the ghetto – to them it was just Budapest so they bombed it. We had to go down to the cellars many times and on one occasion part of the building collapsed. Fortunately, nobody died.

We hated the Nazis and Arrow Cross but staying alive was the primary issue. The Nazis would take Jews to the concentration camps or kill them as they went – anywhere at any time. They also mined the ghetto, which they could blow up when it was convenient. I was in constant fear but I also did not understand what was going on.

How did you feel when you were liberated by the Red Army on 18 January 1945?
The Russians entered Budapest, were told that the ghetto existed and freed us only minutes before we were supposed to be blown up. The Germans didn't have time because they realised they had to escape. The Russians found around 3,000 bodies in the ghetto.

My aunt was still with me and without her I wouldn't be here. In the ghetto she did everything she could for me, including finding food. She was an incredible woman. We left, along with thousands of others, in a completely dazed condition. By that time you were in a different frame of mind and not really with it. It's hard to explain but in the ghetto you were conditioned to be almost hypnotised. When we came out, it was to a city that we hardly recognised. Everything was in ruins: the bridges were blown up, most of the houses were damaged or on fire and we didn't know what to do.

How were you reunited with your family?
My aunt found someone who said my father had survived the labour camp. He and my uncle escaped to Romania and had no idea what happened to my mother, aunt and me. We travelled there by getting lifts in various vehicles before I was reunited with my father.

My mother had been taken to Mauthausen concentration camp and survived in unbelievable conditions. She suddenly appeared in Romania and it was like she returned from certain death. There was surprise and happiness but my father hadn't expected her to survive. He had started a relationship with a local lady and was planning to marry her. Can you imagine the situation! My mother was very courageous and took me back to Budapest before she divorced my father.

HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION

How was life in Budapest under Soviet rule?
Everything was controlled by the Communist Party, including the press and radio. There were spies everywhere and we were forced to learn Russian at school. If you said anything against the government, you could be disappeared and never seen again. The irony is that there is a building in central Budapest that was used by the Nazis to torture people. It was used by the Soviets for the same reason.

I tried to live as 'normally' as I could but life was very hard because you had to survive on very basic food. We had no fridges or washing machines so it was a different way of living. I also wasn't allowed to go to university because I was middle-class and Jewish. I didn't have a choice but to go to a railway technical college.

I graduated in 1955 and had the most menial, mind-numbing job on the railways checking the safety of rails along the track. This kind of life couldn't go on, people were fed up and that became obvious when Hungarian students said, 'Enough is enough.' We were under a Soviet regime and they were going to rise up and free Hungary.

What are your memories of the Hungarian Revolution in October 1956?
We lived in a small flat close to Parliament Square. There were constant bombardments and we slept in the bathroom because we were afraid. On 25 October, thousands of people went to Parliament Square to demonstrate but they didn't realise it was surrounded by the armed forces on the rooftops. A lot of people were demonstrating but then we started hearing shots. I decided to go home because it was really uncomfortable.

That saved my life a second time because the police ordered the dispersion of the crowd[without exception]. They started opening fire and at least 300 people were killed. I returned the day afterwards and you could see blood on the pavement with pieces of clothing and bodily remains. The Soviet regime then began a brutal revenge.

How did you escape from Hungary?
My mother and I, along with a friend of mine, decided to escape. Because I worked on the railway I had free tickets so we crossed the Danube in November 1956 and took a train towards Austria. We travelled in constant fear that it might be boarded by Soviet officials but we got off near the border.

It was icy and we had to cross canals and bridges while there were constant mines, searchlights and tanks. It took us 12 hours to cover 25 miles [40km] towards the border. When 10-12 of us got to the border we found ourselves under a watchtower. If it had been occupied we would not have survived. This was the third time I was lucky because there was nobody there.

As we approached the border, the Austrians shone searchlights to show us where to go and before long we were free. You couldn't think about what you'd done – it was unreal. Some people had been killed on the border. Some stepped on mines while others were arrested and killed, so we were lucky.

'NEVER AGAIN'

What are your thoughts on the IWM exhibition?
It's a wonderful opportunity. There has been immense thinking behind the exhibition, particularly about what survivors from different countries have gone through with different ways of surviving.

What is the significance of the teddy bear in your portrait?
The teddy has been with me since I was three years old. It's funny but also sentimental and sad. I had him in my pocket through everything – all the escapes, the ghetto, revolution and England. He reminds me of several things, including my early life, which I don't really remember but I knew it was a good life. It also reminds me what I went through and by looking at it memories come back.

You've spoken about your experiences many times, particularly to schoolchildren. What is the message that you impart to them?
I always say to schools that you are normally told what happened in Germany or Poland but very rarely about Hungary. One of my motivations is to explain that we suffered as much as other countries. Not many realise that there were two periods of persecution in Hungary – Nazi and Soviet. I hope that by talking and writing about it future generations will say, 'Never again.'

© IWM

Below, left to right: *John Hajdu pictured with his teddy bear and IWM portrait at the launch of Generations: Portraits of Holocaust Survivors, 4 August 2021*

Demonstrators on top of a tank in front of the parliament building in Budapest during the Hungarian Revolution

John Hajdu's only surviving toy from childhood was this small teddy bear. He managed to keep it through the Budapest Ghetto, Hungarian Revolution and escape to Britain

Generations: Portraits of Holocaust Survivors runs at IWM London until 9 January 2022. For more information visit: **www.iwm.org.uk**. To read John Hajdu's autobiography visit: **www.hmd.org.uk**

© Getty

© John Hajdu

MUSEUMS & EVENTS

Discover Dublin's commemoration of Ireland's armed independence struggle, Worcestershire's wartime radar history and a curious medieval tower in the far north of England

Forging the Irish Free State

The National Museum of Ireland in Dublin has an exhibition dedicated to the conflicts that led to Irish independence 100 years ago

The National Museum of Ireland (NMI) is the Republic of Ireland's leading museum institution. With three branches located in Dublin it's multifaceted in scope with a strong emphasis on Irish history, archaeology, art, culture and natural history. One of its branches is the NMI Museum of Decorative Arts and History, which is located at the former Collins Barracks in the Arbour Hill area of central Dublin.

The building, originally called the Royal Barracks, was built in 1702 during the reign of Queen Anne and was once the largest barracks in Europe. It housed various British infantry regiments and also served as a prison. One of the leaders of the 1798 Rebellion, Wolfe Tone, was imprisoned, court-martialled and convicted of treason here. It served as a British base during the 1916 Easter Rising and was handed over to troops of the Irish Free State in 1922. Renamed Collins Barracks after the Free State's first commander-in-chief Michael Collins, it was used by the Irish Defence Forces until 1997.

2021 marks the centenary of the Anglo-Irish Treaty that established the Irish Free State. This ended the Irish War of Independence but led to the Irish Civil War of 1922-23. To commemorate this milestone in Irish history, the NMI is displaying important items at a new exhibition at Collins Barracks called Irish Wars 1919-23. It forms part of the permanent exhibition Soldiers and Chiefs, but Irish Wars substantially re-imagines this display as part of the NMI's decade of centenaries commemorations.

Items include the death masks of prominent Republican figures (such as Michael Collins, Arthur Griffith, Cathal Brugha and Terence MacSwiney) along with unique military artefacts. These include experimental weapons made by the Old IRA, items used by Republican prisoners to escape from British prisons, an IRA intelligence file, Royal Irish Constabulary handcuffs and the propeller of a British aircraft that was destroyed at Kilfinane in 1921.

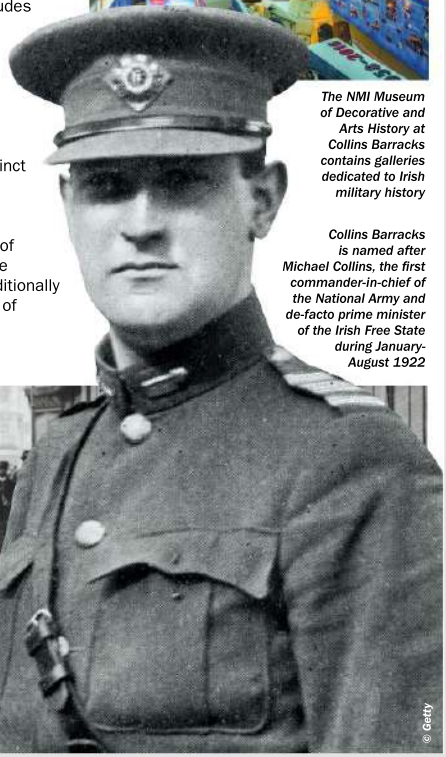
The exhibition is also available online and supported by a wide range of multimedia, including contemporary newsreel film provided by the Irish Film Institute. Footage includes stop-and-search operations, funerals and IRA captures from 1919-22. Themes that are explored include civil disobedience, imprisonment, hunger strikes, propaganda, women in warfare and the effects of conflict on civilian populations.

Curator Brenda Malone says: "A distinct aspect of the reimagined Irish Wars exhibition is the focus on the personal stories of ordinary people involved in atrocities and tragedies on both sides of the conflict. In developing it, we had the opportunity to expand and develop traditionally underrepresented stories, like the role of women in the conflict."

For more information visit the museum website: www.museum.ie

During British rule, Collins Barracks was known as the Royal Barracks. The 10th Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers operated from there during the Easter Rising

The NMI Museum of Decorative and Arts History at Collins Barracks contains galleries dedicated to Irish military history



Collins Barracks is named after Michael Collins, the first commander-in-chief of the National Army and de-facto prime minister of the Irish Free State during January-August 1922

The Irish Civil War was fought between anti-Treaty IRA forces (pictured) and the pro-Treaty National Army of the Irish Free State, which was supported by Britain

Conflict at Croome

A Georgian estate in Worcestershire housed the exiled Dutch queen during WWII, as well as an RAF aerodrome that specialised in radar research

Croome Court is a mid-18th century mansion near Upton-upon-Severn in Worcestershire that's surrounded by extensive landscaped parkland designed by Capability Brown. Built for the earls of Coventry, it was never designed for a military purpose but it was acquired by the Ministry of Works during WWII. It was leased to the Dutch government-in-exile and provided a brief refuge for Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands. An aerodrome, RAF Defford, was constructed on the estate in 1941 and became the home of the top-secret Radar Research Flying Unit. The radar experiments and developments carried out at Defford were of great importance to the Allied war effort and paved the way for many modern electronic applications.

Croome is now managed by the National Trust and some of RAF Defford's remaining buildings, including the Station Sick Quarters, have been restored and turned into a museum. This contains wartime artefacts, emotive personal possessions, videos and costume displays. There is also a carefully restored Gloster Meteor night fighter, which was actually the last aircraft to fly out of the airfield before it closed. The twin-engine jet is exhibited in its original green and grey camouflage scheme. The site is run by the volunteer Defford Airfield Heritage Group (DAHG), which works closely with the National Trust team at Croome on many projects.

For more visit: www.nationaltrust.org.uk/croome

Queen Wilhelmina only stayed at Croome for a fortnight because of the noise from nearby RAF Defford

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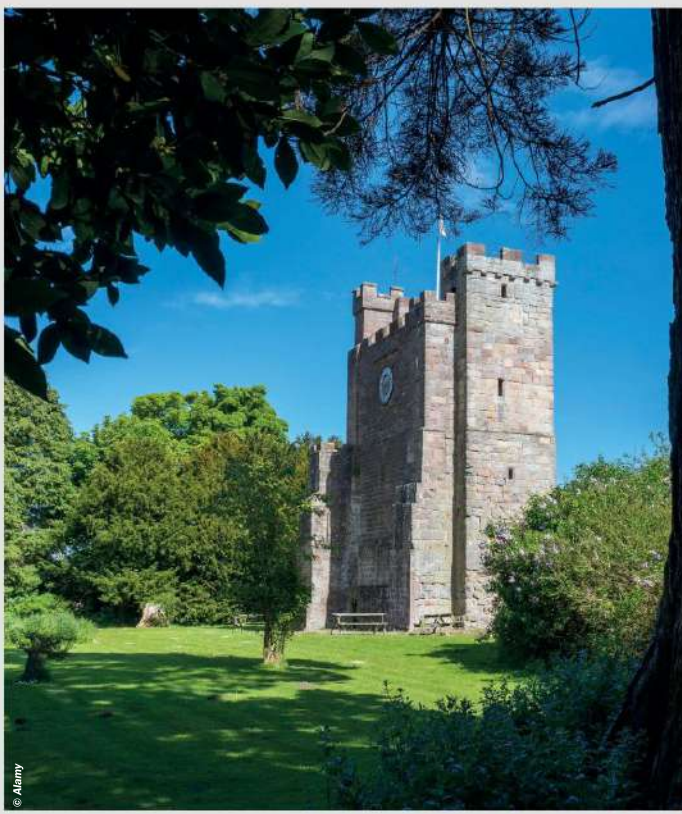
RAF Defford's last Gloster Meteor is displayed in the grounds of the museum



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All about the watchtower

Preston Tower is a unique medieval fortification near the Anglo-Scottish border which has connections to the Battle of Flodden

Located close to Bamburgh Castle in Northumberland, Preston Tower is a fine example of a 'pele' tower. Built during 1392-99, this small fortified keep was constructed at a time when border warfare was endemic between England and Scotland. It was one of 78 pele towers built in the county and was designed primarily as a defensive structure.

Preston Tower's owners included Sir Guiscard Harbottle, the constable of the larger Prudhoe Castle. He was reputedly killed at the Battle of Flodden in 1513 by King James IV of Scotland, who was himself later slain on the battlefield. Following the Union of the Crowns in 1603, half of the tower was pulled down and the stone used for local farm buildings.

An architectural historian once described Preston Tower as "among the most spectacular pieces of medieval masonry in England". Today it is privately owned, although it is open to the general public. The first floor is restored to how it might have looked in 1400 while the second floor is dedicated to the history of Flodden and border warfare. The second floor also houses the mechanism for a Victorian clock that is similar in its design to Big Ben.

For more visit: www.prestontower.co.uk

***Left:** Preston Tower's two-metre-thick walls bear the same masons' marks as those at Warkworth Castle further down the Northumberland coast*

REVIEWS

Our pick of the latest military history books

HITLER'S FIRST 100 DAYS

WHEN GERMANS EMBRACED THE THIRD REICH

A CHILLING LOOK INTO HOW ADOLF HITLER TOOK CONTROL OF GERMANY

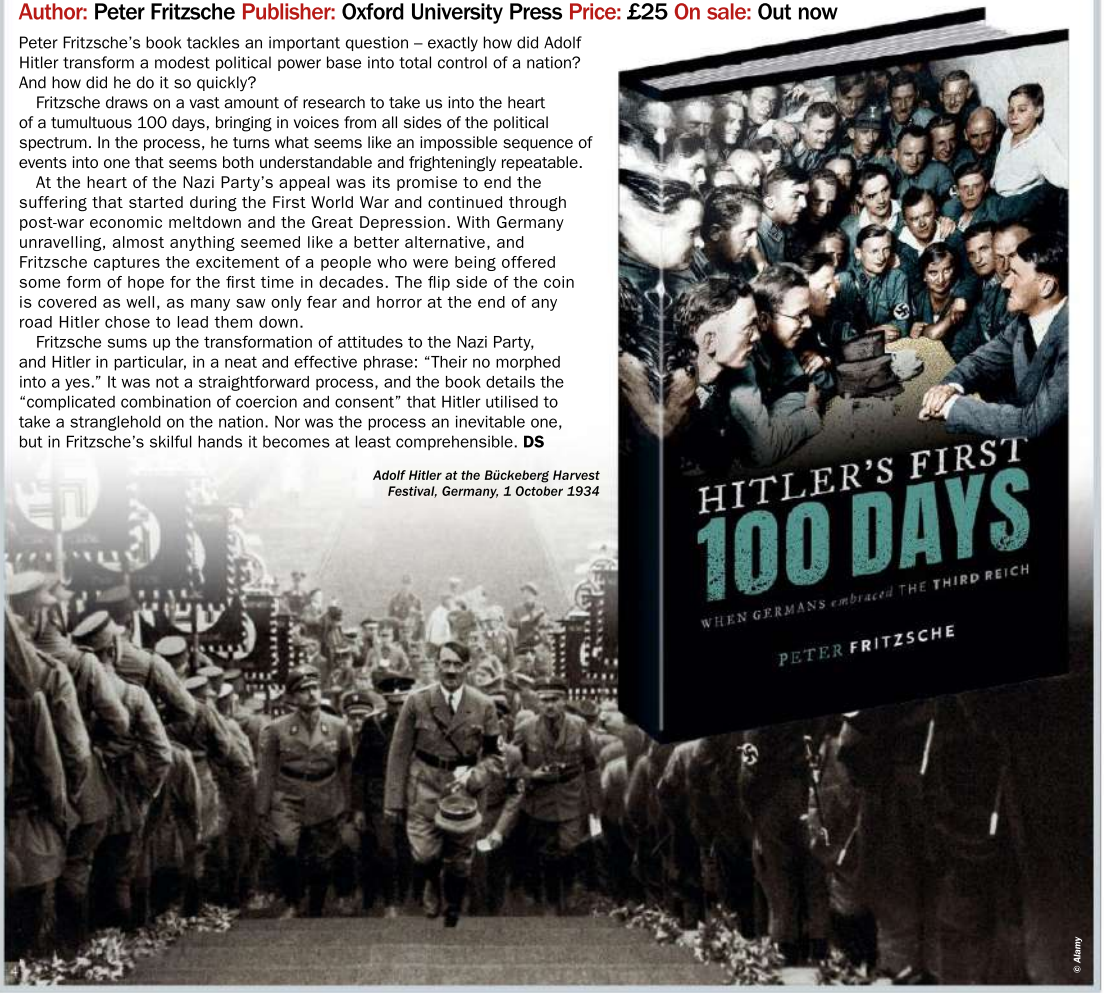
Author: Peter Fritzsche **Publisher:** Oxford University Press **Price:** £25 **On sale:** Out now

Peter Fritzsche's book tackles an important question – exactly how did Adolf Hitler transform a modest political power base into total control of a nation? And how did he do it so quickly?

Fritzsche draws on a vast amount of research to take us into the heart of a tumultuous 100 days, bringing in voices from all sides of the political spectrum. In the process, he turns what seems like an impossible sequence of events into one that seems both understandable and frighteningly repeatable.

At the heart of the Nazi Party's appeal was its promise to end the suffering that started during the First World War and continued through post-war economic meltdown and the Great Depression. With Germany unravelling, almost anything seemed like a better alternative, and Fritzsche captures the excitement of a people who were being offered some form of hope for the first time in decades. The flip side of the coin is covered as well, as many saw only fear and horror at the end of any road Hitler chose to lead them down.

Fritzsche sums up the transformation of attitudes to the Nazi Party, and Hitler in particular, in a neat and effective phrase: "Their no morphed into a yes." It was not a straightforward process, and the book details the "complicated combination of coercion and consent" that Hitler utilised to take a stranglehold on the nation. Nor was the process an inevitable one, but in Fritzsche's skilful hands it becomes at least comprehensible. **DS**



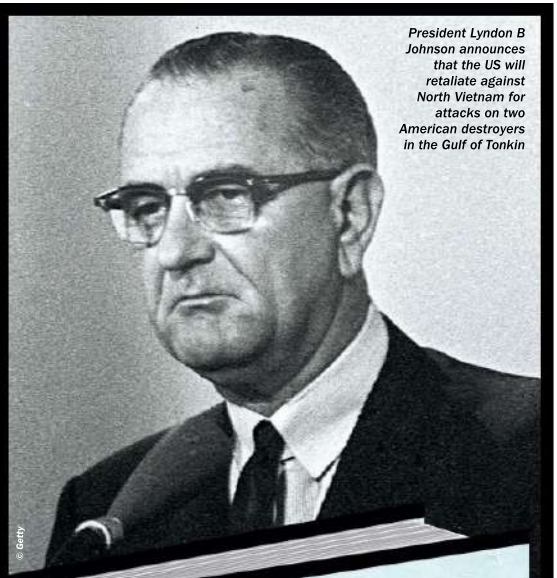
Adolf Hitler at the Bückeberg Harvest Festival, Germany, 1 October 1934

© Alamy

THE TONKIN GULF YACHT CLUB

EXAMINING THE ROLE OF NAVAL AVIATION IN THE VIETNAM WAR

Author: Thomas McKelvey Cleaver **Publisher:** Osprey Publishing **Price:** £20 **On sale:** 14 October



President Lyndon B Johnson announces that the US will retaliate against North Vietnam for attacks on two American destroyers in the Gulf of Tonkin

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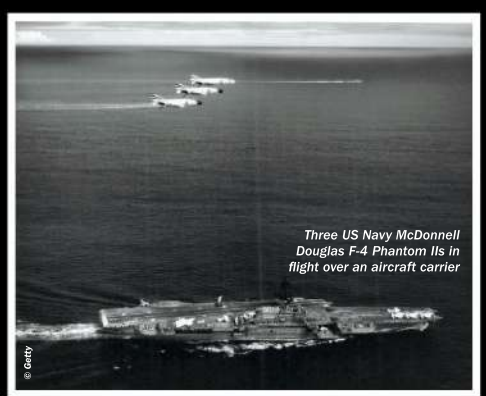
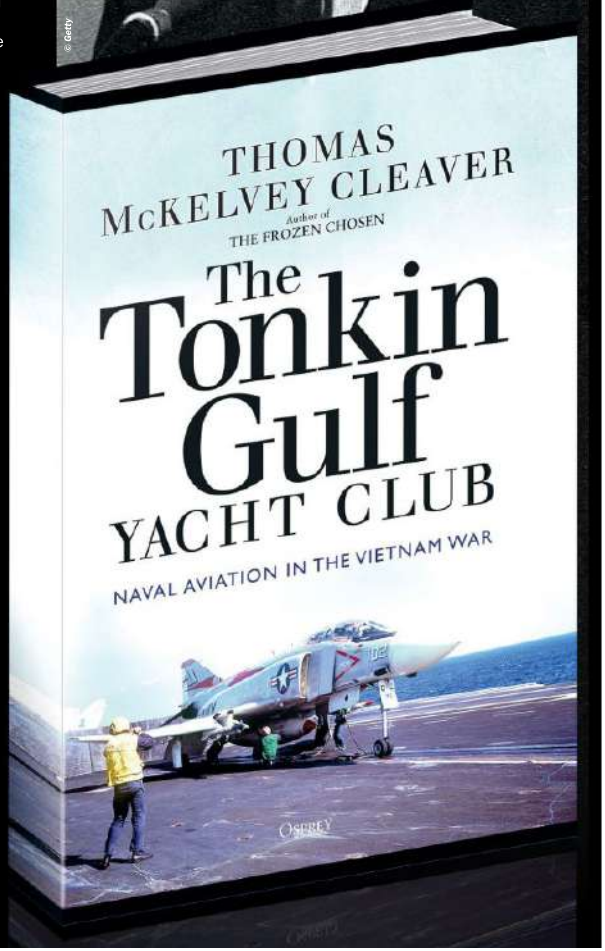
In July 1964, a North Vietnamese attack on US warships in the Gulf of Tonkin sparked direct American involvement in the Vietnam War. Within days, US Navy aircraft were making retaliatory attacks on the Communist Democratic Republic of (North) Vietnam. It was the start of a decade-long commitment, which would see navy aircraft operating across North Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and the Republic of (South) Vietnam. It was a campaign limited by politics and technology, and the Navy found their superior equipment was far less effective than hoped. The author pulls no punches in critiquing the shortcomings of American tactics and technology, which were geared towards intercepting lumbering nuclear bombers and ill-suited to swirling dogfights. Solutions including new aircraft and missile types, and the establishment of the Navy Fighter Weapons School – 'Top Gun'. Marked improvements in performance followed.

This book examines the development of the US Navy's campaigns from the initial 1964 strikes to the fall of Saigon and Mayaguez Incident of 1975. The story is told largely from the US point of view but also covers the development of the North Vietnamese air defences, with testimony from Vietnamese aircrew. The author achieves a good balance between the technicalities of the equipment and the human experiences of the operators, making the book both detailed and readable. Although the author concentrates on the fighter war, other roles – ground attack, tanker, electronic warfare, search and rescue – are also covered. Throughout the author quotes extensively from surviving aircrew to put the reader right in the cockpit. **SH**



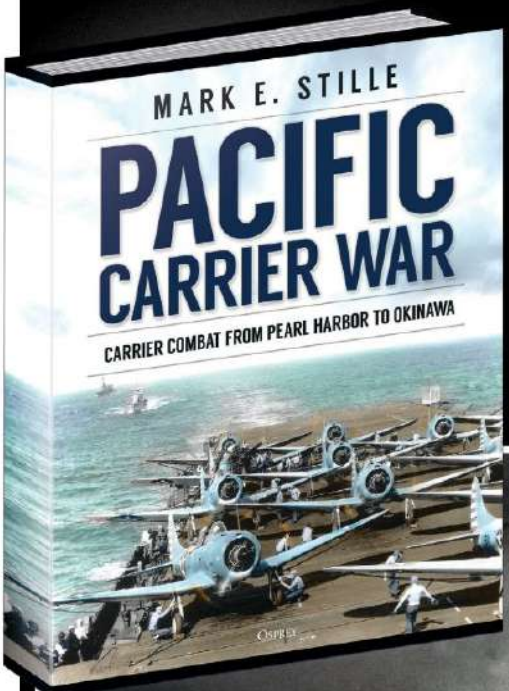
Three US Navy McDonnell Douglas F-4 Phantom IIs in flight over an aircraft carrier

© Getty



PACIFIC CARRIER WAR

Author: Mark E Stille **Publisher:** Osprey Publishing **Price:** £30 **On sale:** 14 October

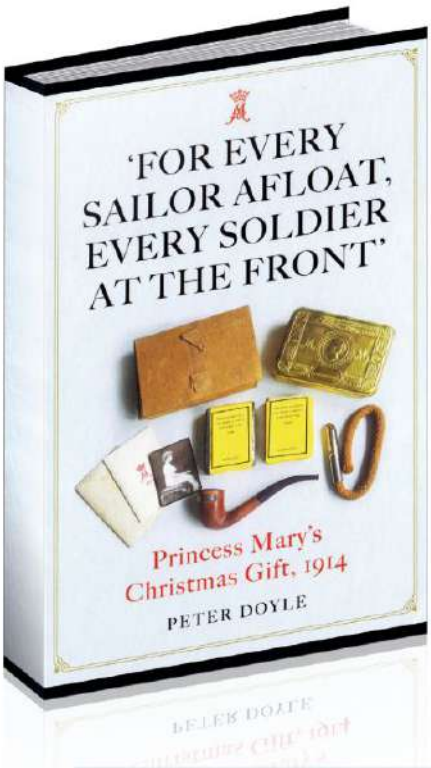


HOW THE AIRCRAFT CARRIERS OF JAPAN AND THE US FOUGHT FOR SUPREMACY

The Pacific Campaign from 1941-45 was dominated by the aircraft carrier. It made the initial Japanese strikes at Pearl Habor and rapid advance across the Pacific and Southeast Asia possible, and likewise formed the backbone of the American struggle to force them back. The course the war in the Pacific became wedded to the success or failure of the carriers at battles such as Midway, Eastern Solomons, Santa Cruz and the Philippine Sea. Control of the sea was crucial to winning the war, and carriers became the single most important weapon in this fight. The various strengths and weaknesses of these ships, aircraft, aircrew and doctrine were the deciding factors between victory and defeat.

The highly experienced author takes the reader through the basics of the carrier and aircraft designs and leadership on each side before providing a detailed account of the key carrier actions of the war. The book is readable and very well illustrated with photographs and maps, and includes detailed orders of battle. The focus of the book remains the carrier vs carrier actions rather than aircraft carrier operations per se, so (despite the title) this book more or less ends with the Battle of the Philippine Sea in June 1944, with only very brief coverage of the last year of the war and the carrier operations off Okinawa and Japan itself. Even so, this is an excellent introduction into the decisive role played by aircraft carriers in the Pacific campaigns. **SH**

A Japanese bomb splashes near of the USS Enterprise during the Battle of Santa Cruz Islands, 26 October 1942



'FOR EVERY SAILOR AFLOAT, EVERY SOLDIER AT THE FRONT'

PRINCESS MARY'S CHRISTMAS GIFT, 1914

THE STORY OF HOW NEARLY THREE MILLION MEN RECEIVED A PRESENT FROM ROYALTY

Author: Peter Doyle **Publisher:** Unicorn **Price:** £20 **On sale:** Out now

Growing up in the late 1960s, I was fascinated by the gold-coloured tin which stood on my grandparents' mantelpiece. When told that it was "from the war" my interest was piqued yet further. And I was not alone in growing up in a family where these Princess Mary's Christmas Gift tins of 1914 were part of the family lore.

In his inimitable, authoritative and very readable style, Peter Doyle has produced a fascinating record of this iconic object from the Great War. Across its 320 pages, the reader is presented with a wealth of detail and astonishing facts about the gift.

The detail on display is astonishing, but the reader should not be put off by thinking: 'This is just a book about a gift tin.' This book is much more than that. Quite apart from factual detail about the gifts' inclusivity – ensuring that all faiths, tastes and personal preferences were catered for – the book also contains fascinating and compelling testimony by and about some of its 2.7 million recipients.

Quite aside from the quality of the content – which is as exciting as the content of the gift tins themselves must have been to the recipients – this hardback is beautifully produced, with an array of superb images and beautiful illustrations. Doyle's work is itself a little treasure and a wonderful tribute to the precious tins gifted over a century ago.

Appropriately, as we move inexorably towards Christmas 2021, this reviewer suggests that it would make a wonderful gift, and a must for those with an interest in the First World War. **AS**

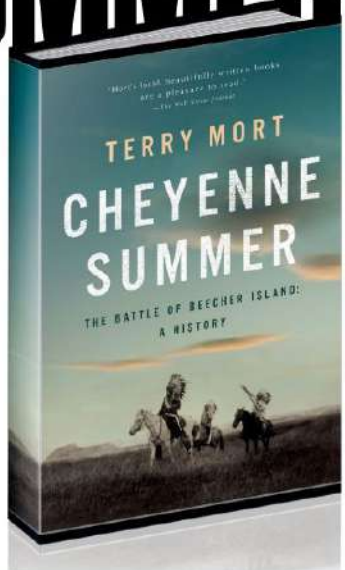
"DOYLE'S WORK IS ITSELF A LITTLE TREASURE AND A WONDERFUL TRIBUTE TO THE PRECIOUS TINS GIFTED OVER A CENTURY AGO"

CHEYENNE SUMMER

THE BATTLE OF BEECHER ISLAND

AN ENGROSSING STUDY OF THE CLASH BETWEEN SETTLERS AND THE NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBES

Author: Terry Mort **Publisher:** Pegasus Books **Price:** £20 **On sale:** Out now



Running through Terry Mort's latest work is the vast project to build a railway between both coasts of the United States. This served as both a symbol of the growing strength of America and a focal point for the resentment of the tribes who were forced to contemplate an end to their way of life. It was a band of civilian scouts, sent out to protect the railroad, who encountered a large force of Cheyenne and Sioux warriors on 17 September 1868, on a sandbar of the Republican River.

Much of Mort's book serves as an introduction to the subject of hostilities between settlers and the peoples they displaced. As such, the title of the book is fitting, but the subtitle is slightly misleading. Those most interested in the Battle of Beecher Island may be surprised at having to wait until page 219 for it to start.

This is more than compensated for by the fact that the opening sections of the book are both fascinating and well-written. It is also far more rewarding to read about the events of the actual battle with some grounding on the tactics, abilities and customs of both sets of combatants.

Mort has an accessible writing style (although a tendency to repeat certain phrases and quotes crops up from time to time), and very often he displays a wry wit. The result is a narrative that skips along engagingly, never seeming like a lecture even though a huge amount of information is being conveyed. **DS**

WWII THIS MONTH...

OCTOBER 1941

To commemorate 80 years since the Second World War, **History of War** will be taking a look at some of the key events taking place during each month of the conflict

FALL OF ODESSA

A German unit photographed during street fighting in Odessa, Ukraine. The Siege of Odessa began in August 1941, with Soviet defences holding off Romanian and German troops for over 70 days, stalling and severely weakening the Romanian forces in the region in particular. The Soviets finally withdrew on 16 October, leaving the city to the Axis forces, though resistance continued. On 22 October a bomb exploded in the Romanian Army HQ in the city, killing many officers. This event preceded the rounding up and murder of around 30,000 Jews by Axis troops, many of whom were shot dead or burned alive.

© Getty

DIG FOR VICTORY

Muscovites dig deep anti-tank trenches on the outskirts of Moscow in preparation for the expected Nazi assault on the capital. After the German advance became apparent, thousands of mostly women and the elderly were pressed into service to build up the city's defences, with limited tools and all while under the threat of Luftwaffe attack. Later women, children and non-combatants were evacuated from Moscow, as well as the Soviet government. It's estimated that around 320km of defensive trenches were dug by Muscovites during this period.

RISE OF TOJO

On 18 October, General Hideki Tojo formed a new cabinet in Japan, himself becoming prime minister. Retaining his existing positions as head of the army and the war ministry, Tojo became de facto dictator of Japan and was instrumental in the country's path to war with the United States and the British Empire. Forced to resign in 1944 as the tide of the war turned against Japan, Tojo was executed for war crimes four years later.

WINTER CAMPAIGN

Adolf Hitler gives a speech at the Berlin Sportpalast, marking the beginning of the annual Winterhilfswerk, or Winter Relief. In his address he declared that the Soviet Union was "broken and will never rise again".

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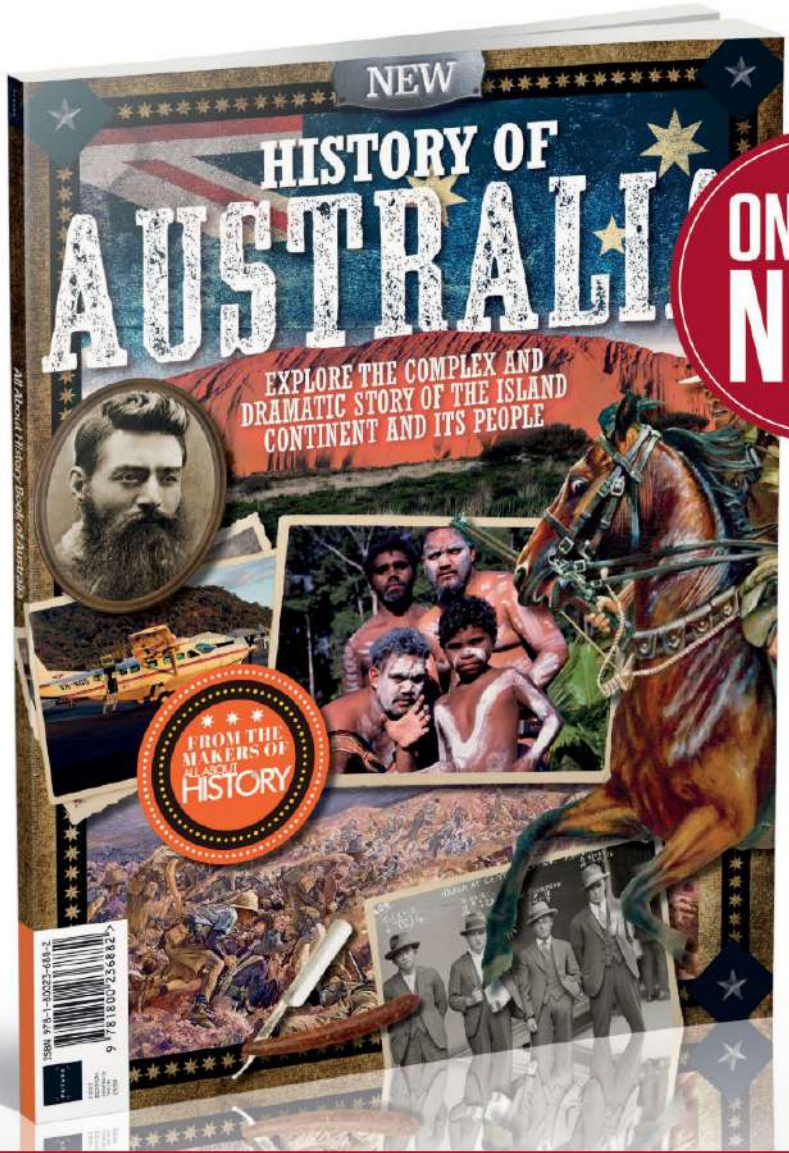
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NAPOLEONIC BANNER

This simple flag was the standard of a French infantry regiment and was captured at the Battle of Waterloo

Image: National Army Museum

***Left:** When Napoleon's original standards were destroyed by the Bourbons, some Bonapartist officers burned them beforehand, mixed the ashes with wine and drank them*

© Alamy

***Above:** Sergeant Charles Ewart of the Royal Scots Greys famously captured the standard and eagle of the French 45th Regiment of the Line at Waterloo*

During the Napoleonic Wars, battle standards served as rallying points for soldiers and were used by commanders to quickly identify units during combat. Such was their importance that troops were supposed to fight to the death rather than allow their banner to be captured. For French regiments under Napoleon's rule, banners took an even greater significance. Each standard was topped with a gilded eagle that was the personal gift from the emperor to every regiment in his armies. However, when Napoleon was first exiled to Elba in 1814 the restored Bourbon monarchy ordered all Napoleonic eagles and standards to be destroyed.

Napoleon soon returned to France in 1815 to commence his 'Hundred Days' rule and new eagles and standards had to be hastily created. One of the new standards was this pictured banner, which belonged to the 105th Regiment of the Line. Indications of its rushed manufacture can be seen in the disjointed lettering and plain background. However, it was still a source of pride for the 105th and was carried into battle at Waterloo on 18 June 1815.

The banner was captured by the British Royal Dragoons in a cavalry charge led by Captain Alexander Kennedy Clark. It was sent back to London after Napoleon's defeat as a trophy and has never returned to France. The eagle that topped the 105th's standard with the number '105' still forms part of the uniform of the regiment's successor: The Blues and Royals – the second-most senior regiment in the British Army.

NATIONAL ARMY MUSEUM

The French banner is held in the collections of the National Army Museum in Chelsea, London. For more information visit: www.nam.ac.uk

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Has been drawn westward
Toward a glorious death.
That is my destiny.
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Will pick their fill
From the sovereign's warriors.
I'll be there to feed them.

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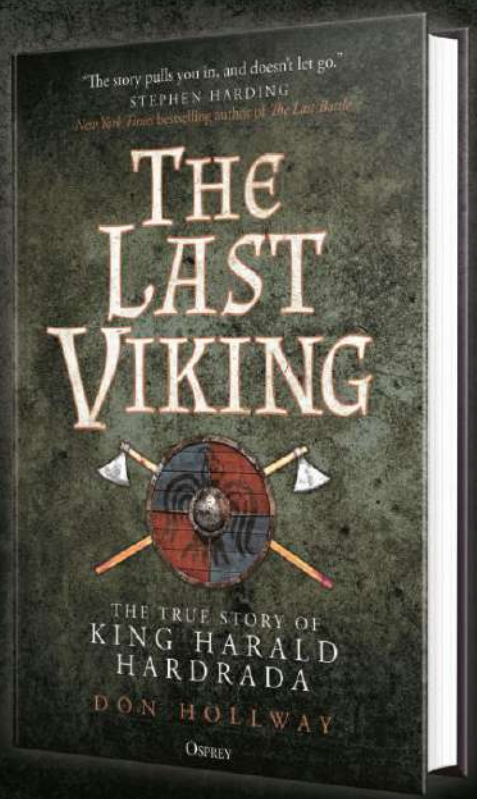
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